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Our Teacher of the Deaf recommends digital learning resources



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My deafness didn't stop me...

becoming an award-winning artist

By Abbi Brown



Tedi

AT THE AGE OF JUST 24, TEDI LENA IS AN ACCOMPLISHED ARTIST - BUT HIS CAREER NEARLY TOOK HIM DOWN A VERY DIFFERENT PATH.

Although Tedi has enjoyed drawing since childhood, after leaving school, he began training to become a car mechanic. It was during evening art classes at the Hampstead School of Art that the school principal, Isabel H Langtry, noticed Tedi's talent, and awarded him a bursary to study at the school full-time.

"It was a very friendly environment," remembers Tedi, who is profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids. "I was surrounded by artists of all ages who admired my work. There was a very positive attitude towards me. I was selected as Artist in Residence three times."

Tedi, who uses British Sign Language (BSL), initially communicated with his teachers through writing, with his mum

I want to continue my studies at the Royal Academy of Art. It's very competitive but that's my dream.

sometimes stepping in to translate. Later on, the school fought to secure funding for a BSL interpreter for Tedi's lessons, which helped prepare him to study Fine Art at university.


In 2019, just a year after graduating, Tedi's work was selected for the BP Portrait Award exhibit at the National Portrait Gallery. "It was a big achievement and an amazing experience, something that confirmed my talent," says Tedi. Winning the

award fuelled his ambitions as an artist and he's since had his work exhibited in galleries from London to Singapore.

"I want to continue my studies at the Royal Academy of Art. It's very competitive but that's my dream.

"When I'm painting, I'm focused. I feel every single line, colour and form. Of course it's hard work, but I like what I do and it makes me happy.

"My inspiration is nature. I want my painting to express the important message that we must fight now to protect our future.

"I dream to be an art school teacher, but most of all to be me." 



For information you can share with professionals about adapting activities for your child, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/deafawarenessresources.

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We support families to make informed choices and no one option will work for all families. This magazine highlights some of these options. For further information, see our website or call our Freephone Helpline.

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Riaan's story

how his parents and wider family came to terms with his deafness

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Josie's story

how the family increased their digital skills

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Maia's story

how she navigates life as a teenager

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NJ's story

how he's made a name for himself in the competitive world of gaming

p18

Hello



In this special issue of *Families*, we're focusing on all things technology. From online learning, which doesn't seem to be going anywhere any time soon, to gaming, e-safety, social media and online socialising. For deaf children in particular, there are both positives and negatives, and it's a lot to get your head around. But we have tips and tricks for beginners and seasoned pros alike, so you can better support your child whenever and wherever they're online. Of course, it's not just skills that can hold you back when it comes to going digital; accessing equipment is also essential. If you're struggling with this, please do turn to pages 6 and 34 for our tips or call our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880**.

You can also learn more about our exciting new online services and how you can easily access them. As ever, if you're finding it difficult, please do get in touch with us and we can help.

I'd like to say a big thank you to all the families we interviewed for this issue. After a rollercoaster year and with another national lockdown in place, the eagle-eyed among you might have noticed that we weren't able to use our usual wonderful photographers for this issue, but I think each and every family has done a brilliant job of capturing their life at home themselves! We look forward to getting back out there and seeing you all in person as soon as we can.

Kerrina Gray, Editor

✉ magazine@ndcs.org.uk

Kerrina

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Digital tips

We know that not everyone will be able to access the online world easily. If you're struggling to access the information you need for your deaf child online or can't get access to a computer or smartphone, our tips below may have the answer.

- **Libraries:** Many local libraries offer free internet access; you can speak to your local council to locate your nearest one. Or, if you do have access to the internet on a smartphone at home, but are looking for a larger screen or better connection, perhaps to be able to attend one of our online events, visit your local council website to find out where you can book internet access at a library in your area. If you're not sure which council you're part of, you can search your postcode at www.gov.uk/book-internet-access-at-library.
- **Local council:** Get in touch with your local council to find out more about the provision in your area and whether there are any local organisations that may be able to help you access the technology you need. There are lots of local charities which can help you access a computer or the internet, and your local council or Citizens' Advice Bureau will be able to point you in the right direction.
- **Ask the doctor:** If you're worried you won't remember what your child's GP or audiologist has told you, you can ask them to print out the information so you can take it home with you to refer to.
- **Free courses:** If you struggle with computers and want to improve your skills, why not try a free course online? Home and Learn have lots available, including basic introductions, tutorials for different operating systems, and how to protect your computer from viruses. Find out more at www.homeandlearn.co.uk.
- **Helpline:** You can call our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880** for help with a range of questions. You can also ask them to read information from our website out to you over the phone.

For more information on how to access technology, take a look at our Helpline column on page 34.

Get involved!

Staying busy is as important now as it has ever been and there are lots of new and exciting ways to get involved with the National Deaf Children's Society, so why not try something different?

Volunteering can be a great way to keep yourself occupied. If you have thought about how you can share a bit of your spare time, then keep an eye on the volunteering page on our website for information about new and different ways you can get involved and support deaf children, young people and their families. Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/volunteering to see our current opportunities or email volunteer@ndcs.org.uk to find out more.



Our spring superstar!

Last year, Oliver (6) completed an amazing eight-mile cycle ride along the Bristol and Bath Railway Path with his dad and grandad to raise money for the National Deaf Children's Society. Oliver, who became deaf at the age of three after having mumps, raised an amazing £1,223 for us! He said: "It was great fun, can I do it again? With the money we raised, we can help lots of deaf children."



Get through your bucket list by taking on a challenge for us!

Now that the days are starting to get a bit warmer, you might be looking to get active or go on a little adventure. Our fundraising challenge events are the perfect way to achieve this and so much more!

We've secured places in several exciting, once-in-a-lifetime events, including the London Marathon, the Royal Parks Half Marathon and the Big Jump – our skydiving day during Deaf Awareness Week in May.

Or why not take on our brand new walking challenge, Big Step Forward. Everyone is welcome to get involved, with distances suitable for children, families and those who are looking for a longer challenge! Choose your own distance; either 5km, 10km or 50km in a week, and complete it in your local area. Every step will help us stride towards a world without barriers for deaf children. Sign up now for your free fundraising pack with everything you need to get started www.ndcs.org.uk/bigstepforward.

You can also contact our friendly team at ndcschallenges@ndcs.org.uk or call 0207 7014 1135 for more information.



Our new offer for nurseries and schools

We're excited to announce that we'll be launching a new educational membership offer later this year! It can make a big difference when your child's nursery or school understands their needs and is committed to supporting them to succeed. We want more families to experience this, so we're creating a new way for nurseries, schools and further education settings to have access to ongoing support from the National Deaf Children's Society.

Our new educational membership will provide professionals with the knowledge, skills and confidence to best support deaf children's educational needs, with access to tailored information, resources and training.

Keep an eye on our website, social media accounts and your monthly e-newsletter for more updates. If your child's school would like to find out more and pre-register, they can also get in touch with us at membership@ndcs.org.uk.



Sign of the season



Did you know?

The National Deaf Children's Society supports around 90 affiliated local Deaf Children's Societies which help local families connect.

Words: Rosie Vaire

Comment

Let's get digital

I'm delighted to see this spring's magazine is all about going digital, from our local groups meeting online and our digital roadshow workshops, through to Zoom meetings with MPs and the variety of ways you can fundraise for us using just an internet connection. From the time the pandemic began, we've worked hard to transform our services so you can still access them all, from the comfort of your own home. It's worked so well and been so positively received by you that we will be continuing to deliver our services online and working to develop them even further.

It's so important to us that families like yours get the support you deserve right from the start of your journey. We've launched a pilot Parent-to-Parent support scheme to make sure that every parent who is new to childhood deafness has another local parent they can talk to. This scheme covers Bristol, Bath and the surrounding areas and has had an encouraging response from local parents so far.

We've also changed the way we offer events and have had great success in reaching many more families and professionals through Zoom workshops, seminars and informal social events. Parents have been enjoying learning Family Sign Language, attending expert parent sessions and coming to coffee mornings, all online. Home learning tips, mental health advice for teens and sessions about how to apply for benefits have all been enthusiastically welcomed too. The digital events have been so successful, we plan to keep them as part of our programme moving forward, and instead focus our face-to-face events on the families who can benefit from them the most. For more about our online events, turn to page 40.

Despite the challenging times, I'm very much looking forward to the rest of this year. I know it will be an exciting one as we strengthen how we deliver our services digitally and look at other innovations that will benefit families like yours.

Susan

Susan Daniels OBE
Chief Executive



Find the right school for your child



Right across the UK, schools from the early years up to Sixth Form offer specialist provision for deaf children. We know every child is different so making the right choice for your child is key. Here we show you a few of the options.

St John's Catholic Specialist School

St John's Catholic Specialist School is nurturing and positive. We've supported deaf children, and those with communication difficulties, including autism, for 150 years.

Our primary and secondary schools and Sixth Form welcome children on a weekly residential basis, or as day pupils. Our residential care is graded 'outstanding' with inspectors noting: "St John's are relentless in their drive to ensure children learn skills and gain qualifications to be able to live fulfilled lives. Parents say they are amazed at the progress and skills children acquire."

Our dedicated team includes in-house speech and language therapy, audiology and Teachers of the Deaf.



www.stjohns.org.uk

Heathlands School

Heathlands is a specialist day and residential school which caters for deaf children aged 3 to 16. We've been rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted in all areas of school life.

We take a total communication approach to develop children's individual communication potential and give everyone full access to the curriculum. All of our staff are fluent in British Sign Language and we also have qualified Teachers of the Deaf, an onsite Speech and Language Therapy team and subject specialist teachers up to GCSE level.

We have high expectations for all our pupils, as Ofsted commented: "Pupils make outstanding progress from their varied starting points."

www.heathlands.herts.sch.uk



Elmfield

Elmfield is a small school that acts as a regional specialist provision for 3 to 16 year olds. We offer small groups and class sizes to really focus on language development and curriculum attainment, and to develop a real sense of belonging to the school community.

Our curriculum provides the opportunity for group and individualised learning to meet the varied needs of our deaf children. We provide a full sign bilingual experience so children can maximise their potential in both English and British Sign Language.

www.elmfield.bristol.sch.uk



Mary Hare

Mary Hare is a national boarding and day school for the deaf and is the largest school of its kind in the UK. We have pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 at the primary school and Year 7 to Year 13 at the secondary school.

Mary Hare teaches through speaking, listening and the use of technology, so sign language is not used in the classroom. Pupils are encouraged to use their voice and to make the best use of their residual hearing where they can. As Ofsted commented: "Pupils are proud of their school and talk with excitement and passion about all aspects of their education."

www.maryhare.org.uk



St John's



Mary Hare



Heathlands



Elmfield

Top tips...

Helping your child communicate online

Being online a lot has become the norm for many children and young people, but for some it can be a solitary experience. We look at the best ways children can 'meet' their friends online when they're unable to get together in person, and how to make using social media a positive experience.

➔ **Key** ● Early years settings and primary school ● Secondary school ● Further education and university

1 When talking to friends and family via video calls, get them to talk directly to your child – asking how they are, taking turns and using conversation starters. This will help your child to practise the social language they may miss out on day-to-day and may not be currently using.

Helen Latka, Teacher of the Deaf.

2 Introduce your child to an activity they might like to do online eg Minecraft, which they can play remotely with friends. Or, if your child doesn't enjoy chatting on a video call, ask them to help design and host a Zoom quiz for grandparents or close friends instead – a fun way to encourage cooperation and sharing.

Chris Mullen, Social Worker.

3 Remind your child that once they post something online it's there forever, and they should only connect with people they know and trust, as not everyone is who they say they are. Use a password that others won't be able to guess, and never share it with anyone.

Stuart Milligan, Technology Manager.

4 Talk about your own experiences of dealing with online safety (privacy, scams, fake news), or discuss stories in the press – especially about people your child looks up to – as a gentle way to encourage them to consider their own online safety.

Josie, mum to Maia (15), who has Treacher Collins Syndrome and moderate to severe hearing loss.

5 Find out from your child what they know about staying safe online – they probably know more than you! Give them opportunities to come to you about anything they may have seen or learnt that made them feel uncomfortable. Create the space for open, honest, communication.

Ruth Street, Clinical Psychologist and Family Therapist.

6 Social media networks are amazing for keeping in touch with old friends and those who have moved away. But keep your social media following to close friends and those you know well. It's not how many followers or likes you have, but the meaningful connection you can have with people online.

Kirsty (18) is moderately deaf.

7 Unfollow or mute any accounts which make you feel bad about yourself, delete any apps you don't enjoy, and set a daily time limit on your phone to track how much time you spend scrolling. Have weekly movie nights with friends – using Netflix's Teleparty.

Charlie Raine, counsellor trainee, who is deafened.

8 It can be hard to lip-read conversations on-screen, but platforms like Google Meet and Skype have automatic captions. Socialise with friends and family on these apps and use the text chat function to clarify things when needed.

Martin McLean, Post-14 Education Policy Lead.

➔ For more information about keeping your child safe online, go to pages 22 for parent tips and 27 for professional tips or visit www.ndcs.org.uk/esafety. Older children can go to www.buzz.org.uk/keeping-safe-online.

Sara Says



Sara is mum to Sam (13), Matthew (11), Oliver (9) and Charlotte (7). Charlotte's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

📍 www.facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI

🐦 [deafprincessni](https://twitter.com/deafprincessni)

“When we're doing online schooling, it's a joy to work at our own pace at a time that suits.”



Find out more about transcription apps Otter.ai and Live Transcribe on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/livetranscribe.

For tips on online learning, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/learningathometips.

The highs and lows of an online world

FOR LOTS OF PEOPLE, THE FEAR OF TECHNOLOGY WAS VERY REAL, BUT MANY OF US HAVE NOW EMBRACED IT AND GAINED LOTS OF NEW KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE. As mum to a deaf daughter, we rely on technology daily for her cochlear implants to work, but we now turn to websites and apps for many other things too.

Video calls have become the accepted means of holding meetings, having interviews, and chatting with friends and family. Deaf people have used video calls for years, as they allow for the use of sign language, assist with lip-reading and mean we can see facial expressions and body language too. Many video call apps can also provide captioning for speech, although there are delays and mistakes, as with most automated voice-to-text programs.

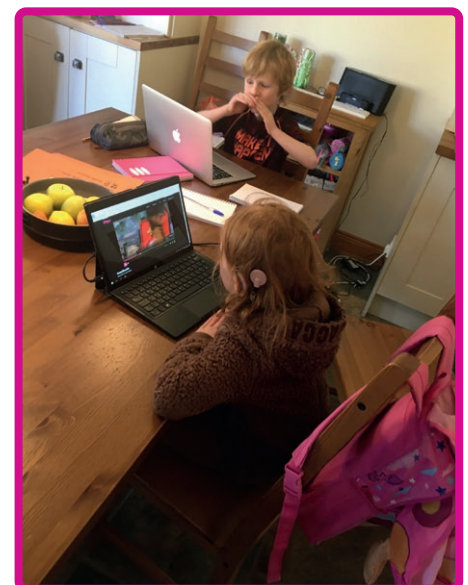
For our family, video calls mean we've been able to continue to enjoy social events with our local deaf group, Sound Friends, and with our Scouts group over the last year. I've been able to attend training events with charities and my workplace and we've had catch-ups with our family, whom we miss so very much. The internet has been making the world feel smaller and more accessible since its inception, but this has increased exponentially during this past difficult year.

Online education has also become a necessary part of schooling now. This has both benefits and barriers for deaf children. In my experience, Charlotte and I found reading online a big challenge and, in the end, needed to get photocopied reading books from school. Lessons online were hard for Charlotte to follow as they don't naturally have as much repetition as she needs. They do, though, give me an introduction to her lesson and how it's being taught, so that I can provide extra information to her to help her

understand the topic and the practice questions within her homework.

Saying that, when we're doing online schooling, it's a joy to work at our own pace, at a time that suits – following online checklists of work to be completed, using downloadable workbooks and interactive apps. It's important, though, that teachers remember to be deaf aware when they're making their own resources or directing us to online links. Things like making sure that: videos have no speech, presentations are visual, and new and essential vocabulary is introduced and explained. It's also good for Charlotte to be able to have listening breaks during the day whenever it suits us as a family (and this also allows me time to go and do my own work!) I hope schools think about introducing some of these things when we're back in school buildings.

Technology and the internet will only continue to expand and develop and this extended period of reliance on it has been beneficial for us all, especially as it's raised awareness on how to include deaf children and those with additional needs. 📞



Life for Louise

The positives of social media



Louise (25) is our young person's columnist. She's severely to profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.

www.louisedeafawareness.com

[LouiseDeafAware](#)

Having social interaction and friendships with other deaf people in my age range has helped my confidence massively.



To learn more about keeping your child safe on social media, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/esafety. You can also read other parents' and young people's tips on page 22.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS A HUGE PART OF PEOPLE'S LIVES TODAY. WE HAVE APPS SUCH AS FACEBOOK, SNAPCHAT, INSTAGRAM, TWITTER AND ZOOM, WHICH ARE ALL GREAT WAYS OF STAYING IN TOUCH WITH OUR LOVED ONES AND MAKING NEW FRIENDS ACROSS THE GLOBE.

I remember when I set up my Deaf Awareness Twitter account all those years ago, I didn't have a clue what I was doing. Six years later, I never would have imagined I'd have a large following and some lovely friends who I've met online!

The purpose of my Twitter page originally was to have a place to rant about the daily communication struggles I face. It was kind of like a diary. I didn't expect anyone to take any notice of the nonsense that I often tweeted about! I honestly didn't think anyone would relate to my experiences. When I was younger, I felt so alone and isolated in the hearing world. I didn't know anyone who had a hearing loss and thought I was the only person my age who was deaf. Boy, how wrong was I?!

I feel so incredibly lucky to have met some wonderful deaf people, all through the world of social media. Regardless of whether I'm still in touch with them or not, I've learnt some positive things from each one of them, which has made me the person I am today. I have a wonderful group of deaf friends, who I speak to daily, and I feel so lucky to know this lovely bunch. Having social interaction and friendships with other deaf people in my age range has helped my confidence massively. If someone told my younger self that she would one day be considering a cochlear implant, she wouldn't believe you! But it's all thanks to my cochlear implanted friends, who have shared their experiences with me and changed my whole perception of them.



Social media has also allowed me to learn more about my deafness, discover tips and learn new life hacks, as well as share my own experiences with fellow deafies and their loved ones. I've used blogging to share my experiences with others, and now write blogs (and columns like this one!) for several deaf-related organisations, which have been received positively by so many people. I also really enjoy reading my fellow deafies' blog pieces and have learnt so much from them. I strongly recommend starting your own blog. Whether you're deaf yourself, or your child or partner is deaf. Nothing is more refreshing than reading other people's experiences. Blogging gives you the opportunity to network with new people, offer tips and advice, and improve your writing and communication skills. I've learnt a lot about myself and begun to embrace this whole new Deaf Lou! You never know, there might be a younger version of yourself out there, who's really struggling with their deafness, and desperately needs a role model to look up to. Although social media is not all perfect, it has opened up a whole new world to me. 



Photo credit: Abi May/Abilou Beauty.



Spreading joy through his family and community

By Kerrina Gray

Born with a number of additional needs, very sadly Riaan only lived a short life. But his parents are determined he'll leave a legacy, and sharing his story is an important place for them to start...



Riaan's story
how his parents and wider family came to terms with his deafness



“I'll never forget the smile he would give us every single morning when we put his hearing aids in for the first time.”

• RIAAN WAS BORN IN APRIL 2020, IN THE MIDDLE OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC. BECAUSE OF THE LOCKDOWN, INVESTIGATIONS INTO WHY HE FAILED HIS NEWBORN HEARING SCREENING WERE DELAYED. “Sharan always had a gut feeling that something was wrong, whereas I was convinced his hearing was fine,” says Riaan’s dad Raj. “When we finally had it confirmed that he had hearing loss, I’ll be completely honest, it shattered me. The worst realisation was that Riaan hadn’t been able to hear our voices at all for 11 weeks. It broke my heart.”

“I always had a gut feeling something wasn’t quite right,” Riaan’s mum Sharan explains. “But for some reason I still wasn’t prepared. I felt that as a family we’d be stigmatised and people would feel sorry for us. I remember asking for a few minutes to call my husband and break the news. That was really difficult – because of coronavirus (COVID-19), the things we would have done together, we weren’t able to.”

Raj and Sharan are British Indians and were concerned about how their wider family might react to Riaan’s hearing loss. “Coming from an Indian culture, typically we don’t openly discuss things like this,” Raj explains. “There were members of both our families who struggled to come to terms with Riaan’s diagnosis. I don’t know whether they didn’t understand it, as language barriers didn’t help, or just couldn’t accept it.”

“Certain comments did hurt. They’d say: ‘Look he’s moving his head to sound, his hearing is fine,’ or ‘It’s not that bad,’ or, ‘His hearing will get better.’ Nothing was said in malice, but we’d accepted the diagnosis and felt no shame about it. We really needed our families on-board. Our baby wears hearing aids, he cannot hear without them, he’s perfect and he’s exactly the person he’s meant to be.”



It wasn't just the reaction from their family, but the wider community too. "The thought of taking him to the Gurdwara [the Sikh place of worship] for the first time and having all these strangers looking at our baby and thinking he was different wasn't nice," Raj says. "But I think that gave us the motivation to become real advocates for hearing loss."

Raj and Sharan began to adjust to life with a newborn baby with hearing loss. "The first time I took Riaan to the outdoor sensory class, there was a lot of noise," Sharan says. "It was the first time I thought, 'Oh, my baby is a little different to all the others.' But I knew it would all be OK if we just made slight adjustments for him."

"I did worry what my extended family would think too. I worried they would pity me and my child. I felt a sense of duty to open their minds, it was important that if people had any questions they should ask, it showed they were wanting to learn. After all, this was all new to us too."

"Part of me, selfishly, felt robbed of my perfect baby so, for me, it was really important to be honest about my feelings with my nearest and dearest, without feeling judged and like a bad mum. I believe if I'd kept these feelings to myself, I'd have struggled to move forward. Taking part in some of the National Deaf Children Society's Zoom coffee breaks was a massive help – especially to hear from other new parents that I wasn't the only one who felt like this."

"I remember asking Raj whether we should share Riaan's diagnosis with our family, his response will always stay with me. He said, 'Yeah of course, it's nothing to hide.' His answer made me feel very empowered. Our siblings, cousins and friends were very positive about the news. It was a little tougher with some of the older generation. I feel like that might have been due to the lack of education. Language barriers also made things difficult. However, when comments were made that I found offensive, I raised them immediately so that people knew how they made me feel, even though it wasn't said with malice."


Due to Riaan's complicated additional needs, including being born with two holes in his heart, the family often had to attend appointments at the hospital. Sometimes Raj and Sharan could go together and sometimes they had to go alone, due to lockdown restrictions.

"Riaan was always a little trooper when we'd go to the hospital," says Raj. "He had such a sweet and cheeky little smile that would melt your heart. He took to his hearing aids so well; they looked so big on him but they didn't bother him. I'll never forget the smile he would give us every single morning when we put his hearing aids in for the first time, the genuine happiness and excitement in his little face will live with us forever."

Very sadly, Riaan passed away at just seven months old. The family had already been spreading awareness, raising money and sharing their story, and now are determined to continue this, all in Riaan's name. Raj and Sharan have since raised over £3,000 for the National Deaf Children's Society.

"I have so many happy memories of Riaan," Raj says. "It may sound silly but one thing I'll never forget is the way Riaan would reach out and grab the drawstrings on my hoodie. My boy had me on a tight leash right from the start, and I loved it."

"For me, it was the smile on his face when he heard my voice when I was out of sight," Sharan adds. "It got me every time."

"I think it's really important for us to share our story," Raj says. "There will be a lot of people, not just from our particular background, who will struggle with sharing the news with those around them. I would say to them, be proud of your child, they are exactly the person they are meant to be. Remember, this is new to your family, education is important. Share your knowledge and set the example to your child that they shouldn't feel negatively about their hearing loss." 



If you'd like to make a donation in Riaan's name, please go to www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/riaanremembers or visit [@Riaan_Remembers](https://twitter.com/Riaan_Remembers) to find out more.

For more support and advice if your child has just been diagnosed as deaf, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/babyhearingloss.

For advice you can share with wider family members, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/familyrelationships.

Your spring checklist

✓ Applying for DLA

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit for deaf and disabled children aged 16 or under. It can help to cover the extra costs of raising a deaf child. You can read more about DLA and find out how to fill in the application form at www.ndcs.org.uk/dla.



✓ Delaying starting school

Is your child's birthday on or between 1 April and 31 August? If so, you could decide to send them to school a year later than others if you think that would be best for them. A delay in starting school can help deaf children have the chance to develop the language, communication and social skills they need. Find out more at: www.ndcs.org.uk/summerborn.



✓ Appealing a primary school placement

If you're unhappy with the primary school placement your child has been offered, it's not too late to appeal. Visit our webpage or contact the Helpline to learn more about appealing school placements. www.ndcs.org.uk/startingschool





Digital discovery

By Katy Blanchard

With so many new apps, websites and programs to use to support her moderately deaf daughter Josie during the school closures, tech-shy mum Holly was determined to gain the skills she needed.



Josie's story
how the family increased their digital skills

WHEN HOLLY WAS CONTACTED BY HER DAUGHTER'S TEACHER TO ASK IF JOSIE, THEN IN YEAR 5, COULD BE MOVED UP A CLASS IN MATHS, SHE WAS OVERJOYED. Home schooling had been difficult for everyone, but this news proved their efforts were paying off.

Josie (now 11), who is moderately deaf on her left side and has autism, had always struggled with the noisy school environment. With that challenge taken away during last year's lockdown, Josie, who wears a hearing aid, could concentrate more easily. In its place, though, was an online world that posed new challenges for the family.

"I'd spent so long trying to limit screen time at home and, just like that, everything seemed to have moved online," says Holly, also mum to Noah (13) and Benjamin (7), who are hearing.

With three children learning at home, they each needed access to their own laptop or iPad to complete their work, but the family couldn't afford to buy new technology. "I posted on the local buying and selling group on Facebook to see if anyone was selling a reliable laptop second-hand, because we needed one for Josie," says Holly. "Luckily, her headteacher saw the post and asked if I wanted to borrow an iPad from the school. I had no idea that the school would loan out equipment. That was a huge help."

Having all the equipment they needed was just the first hurdle for the family. Like many other parents, Holly felt daunted by the various new apps, programs and websites – all with different login details and passwords.

"I'm not a techy person at all – I honestly didn't know where to start with home schooling," says Holly. "Some of the websites we'd used before for homework but most of them were new to me. My phone was quite old and wouldn't even support some of them! I had to get my head around

I'm not a techy person at all... My phone was quite old and wouldn't even support some of the programs we had to use!

The most helpful thing I did was to use the school's Facebook group to speak to other parents.

Microsoft Teams, which the teacher would use to communicate with us. It was all so overwhelming.”

Josie's needs, which also include dyslexia, meant that she needed full-time, one-to-one support from Holly to get the most out of this new way of learning. Working one-to-one meant they didn't need the soundfield system that Josie usually relies on in class to hear the teacher, but they still had to limit background noise at home so Josie could concentrate.

Determined to support Josie as much as possible, Holly spent her evenings familiarising herself with the programs they would need to use the next day. When she needed help, she turned to other parents at Josie's school.

“The most helpful thing I did was to ask other parents,” she says. “The school has a great Facebook group for parents, so I posted on there. I found that other parents were having the same troubles I was – finding pieces of work, for example – and we were able to work things out together.”

Screenshots that other parents shared were particularly useful to Holly, and helped her find easy ways to use some of the new programs. “I learnt from other parents that it was sometimes easier to use the Microsoft Teams app than the website, for example, because there are a few more steps on the website,” she says.

Even when she'd got to grips with all the new programs she was using to support Josie, things were not easy. “Using the screen all the time just didn't seem to be working for us,” says Holly. “Josie finds words more jumbled when reading them on-screen and I found that if I wrote things on paper, she could read and copy them better. When we started using a mix of screen and paper-based learning, it really helped.”

Although Josie came to thrive in her new learning environment, even being moved up again in maths to the top class, it took her a while to get used to things too. “Each Monday morning, we would log in and see 14 assignments to be completed that week,” says Holly. “That was very daunting for Josie but gradually she began to enjoy the challenge. We'd do three each day and

she became determined to have them all done by the Friday.”

It wasn't only Josie's school work that moved online. The youth club for deaf children that Josie had previously attended weekly also hosted virtual meetings using Zoom – another program for the family to navigate.

“We found it difficult to load Zoom on our phones,” says Holly. “When we had to return the school's iPad after lockdown, the youth club loaned one to us. It was great the youth club were still doing something but, like everything else, Zoom took some getting used to.”

Josie struggled to follow Zoom calls at first, with the program set to show everyone on the screen at once. Through trial and error, they found that changing the settings to see one speaker at a time meant Josie could follow the speaker more easily.

“We've all learnt so much about learning and socialising online,” says Holly. “It's had an effect on all the children, but we've seen the biggest change by far in Josie. She's more in control of her learning environment and her confidence has soared.”

Although she admits she still prefers using physical books and paper, Holly says that learning at home has changed some of their learning habits for good. “We always used to do stories before bed,” says Holly. “But now that we read so many books online, we prefer to do this straight after school so we don't have screens at bedtime. Little changes like that have made so much difference to us all.”



Turn to page 28 for more advice on learning online at home. You can also visit our webpage at www.ndcs.org.uk/learnathome.



PRIMARY
YEARS

Your spring checklist

✓ Join a local group

Joining your local deaf children's society can be a fantastic way to get to know other parents and families of deaf children, share experiences and ask for the kind of advice you just can't get elsewhere! Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/localgroups to find a support group near you.



✓ Cycling tips

With the weather getting warmer, now is a great time to think about teaching your child to ride a bike. For parent tips about cycling with your deaf child, including choosing the right cycle helmet and giving safety instructions, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/cycling.



✓ Deafness and autism

Research suggests that around 2–4% of deaf children are autistic, but barriers to communication can make it difficult to get the right diagnosis. For advice about supporting deaf autistic children, including getting the help they need to access education, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/autism.





Maia takes control

By Rosie Vare

Navigating life as a teenager isn't always easy, but, with the support of her family, Maia (15) is taking it all in her stride.



Maia's story
how she navigates life as a teenager



BORN WITH TREACHER COLLINS SYNDROME AND MICROTIA, A CONDITION WHICH RESULTS IN THE UNDER-DEVELOPMENT OF THE OUTER EAR, MAIA (15) HAS ALWAYS TAKEN HER MODERATE TO SEVERE HEARING LOSS IN HER STRIDE. “Everyone says to me, ‘It must be so hard being deaf,’ and it does have its challenges, but I think, because it’s part of my routine and part of my life, sometimes I even forget I’m deaf! I’m so used to changing the batteries in the bone anchored hearing aids I wear, taking them off when I have a shower – it’s just part of me and I don’t feel any different,” Maia explains.

Wearing her hearing technology has allowed Maia to feel confident enough to begin to increase her independence. She often travels by herself now and makes her own plans. “As a teenager you get more independent, travelling by yourself, which I’ve done a couple of times, and also arranging to meet up with friends.”

But it’s not just her social life that’s changed; Maia takes more control of her medical appointments now too. “At a certain age, Mum started saying to me, ‘OK you can do the talking now.’ So when I go up to Great Ormond Street Hospital, I do it all myself now. Sometimes Mum helps, but I answer most of the questions.”

Maia’s mum Josie explains how impressed she’s been with Maia’s growing confidence and her willingness to take control. “It’s really shifted in recent years. At the hospital, they’re very mindful that the child is involved in consent issues. Like with everything new, it’s slow. When they first started doing things through Maia, the appointments were almost double the length, but it was lovely because she’d have her time to ask questions.

“Now we all get a chance to ask and be listened to, but the focus is on Maia, even the administrative stuff. They focus on the child first and you’re secondary, which is great – my

“Masks have made me realise how much I rely on lip-reading and facial expressions.”

“ Surround yourself with the right support, ask for help and try to enjoy life!”

husband and I really appreciate that!”

While Maia is confident in her own independence, she’s been limited in what she’s been able to do for the past year with restrictions related to the pandemic. One major change has been the introduction of face masks into daily life. “When the laws on face masks first came into place, it was really hard,” says Maia. “When we were in the shops, I’d just drift off. I wasn’t really concentrating because I couldn’t hear what others were saying.

“It’s made me realise how much I rely on lip-reading and facial expressions. They help me understand the context of what someone is saying.”

Luckily for Maia this is something her younger sister Annabel (12), who is hearing, can help her with when they’re out and about together. “Annabel is always happy to step in and help Maia with any communication or mask issues,” Josie explains. “The girls are great at supporting each other when they do things without us. Together, they’re good company for each other and more confident in their growing independence.”

Maia is more than happy to share her own feelings on being a big sister too – both the good and the bad! “You get to offer a lot of advice which is quite a lot of fun,” Maia says. “We gossip a lot! It’s nice because you can always talk to each other. You understand each other.

“The bad thing is that you’re the first one to do stuff, you’re the first one to go to secondary school and then you have to tell them about it when they go. So it’s a bit scary, but it’s alright!”

Josie adds: “They’re very different to each other but also really similar in their interests and outlook and what they enjoy doing. That makes a lot of things quite easy but their experiences are so different.”

With a lot of learning now being done online or on laptops, Josie and Maia have spoken about how to take more precautions to make sure Maia stays safe online. “I do the basics,” says Maia. “I don’t talk to anyone I don’t know on social media. I block people who ask to follow me or send me weird messages and I make sure I’m surrounded by my friends.”


“Maia is experienced and grown-up enough that we let her manage it



herself,” Josie adds. “But we talk about it a lot. When she first started using social media, I didn’t know about Instagram, it was totally unfamiliar. So to get myself aware because it was all so new, I got my own account to see how it worked.”

As an independent deaf teenager, Maia has plenty of advice for other young deaf people growing up in these challenging times. “Keep going,” she says. “You’re doing really well as a deaf person. I understand it can be challenging but you’ll get through it.”

Josie has some thoughts to offer other parents of deaf children too. “Sometimes it can be overwhelming and sometimes when you see your child with lots of kids who don’t have similar challenges, it can catch you,” Josie explains. “Try taking a bite-size chunk approach and not worrying too much about the future. Just take it one step at a time and enjoy it all, because every stage has wonderful gifts.

“Surround yourself with the right support, ask for help and try to enjoy life!” 



You can find out more about microtia at www.ndcs.org.uk/microtia-atresia.

For information on how to get the right support at medical appointments, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyteens.

For advice on involving hearing siblings, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/siblings.



SECONDARY YEARS

Your spring checklist



Check out our family blogs

As one of our family bloggers, Maia’s mum Josie has shared lots more helpful advice about raising a deaf teenager over on our family blog. Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/familyblogs to read stories and top tips from Josie and our other family bloggers.



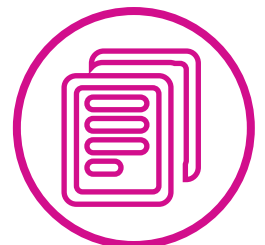
Childline Deaf Zone

Whether your child is worried about bullying, discrimination, mental health or simply wants someone to chat to, Childline’s Deaf Zone is a great resource for deaf children and young people. Visit the site for deaf-friendly advice and support on a range of issues. www.childline.org.uk/deafzone



Accessibility guidelines

Does your child struggle to understand school resources? All schools have a responsibility to provide resources in a way which is accessible to deaf children and young people. Share our accessibility guidelines with your child’s teachers to help them adapt lessons and educational content to suit your child. www.ndcs.org.uk/accessible-resources





NJ's a game changer

By Elayne Nunan

Nishit (17) has ambitions to take the world by storm in work and play. He's rising up the ranks in the competitive world of online gaming and aims to level-up the playing field for other deaf young people too...



NJ's story
how he's made a name for himself in the competitive world of gaming

FOCUSED ON HIS COMPUTER SCREEN, INTENT ON BEATING HIS COMPETITORS, NISHIT, KNOWN AS NJ, OR BY HIS ONLINE ALIAS INSPIRIT, IS A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT.

His talent and passion for gaming have catapulted him to the top level in his main game Overwatch. NJ is also profoundly deaf, though determined it won't hold him back – in anything!

"There was no newborn hearing screening in India where NJ was born," says mum Monika. "At four months, I noticed he didn't respond to noises – like the phone ringing. Specialists sent him for hearing tests, then told us he was deaf. My husband and I were devastated, worried whether he'd ever speak or pass exams."

Hearing aids helped NJ, and Monika spent hours practising speech and language therapy with him, teaching him to lip-read the Hindi language. NJ was four before he spoke his first words – Hindi for 'brother' when his new baby brother arrived, then 'Mum'.

"Nurseries and schools had no facilities for deaf children, but I sent NJ so he could observe other children," says Monika. "I coached him with speech therapy, taught him singing rhymes. His teacher taught him to write, and he began speaking more."

They moved to the UK when NJ was five. With a Special Educational Needs (SEN) statement (now known as an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in England) and attending a school for deaf children, he thrived. Monika learned and taught him British Sign Language (BSL), then both his parents coached him for the 11-plus exam.

"His school said it was too difficult, but he got a place at grammar school – everyone was shocked," says Monika. "Cochlear implants at 15 helped his speech and school progress too. He went from grade three in English to a nine in his GCSE!"



My top tip would be enjoy the game and watch other, better players, to learn from them.

“These achievements unfixed my ideas and freed me from thinking being deaf would hold me back.”

Now chasing top A-Level grades in Chemistry, Economics and Product Design, NJ’s also excelled in extracurricular activities; he’s won swimming galas and awards and passed guitar exams with distinction. NJ credits these achievements, and passing his 11-plus, with boosting his self-confidence and belief.

“I’d think, ‘I’m deaf, it’ll be impossible,’ but these achievements showed me it wasn’t, unfixed my ideas and freed me from thinking being deaf would hold me back,” he explains.

Then two years ago, NJ discovered gaming and, despite the challenges deafness presented and having poor vision in his right eye, he discovered another talent.

“I tried many games, found I was really good because I was passionate about playing,” says NJ. “There’s a steep learning curve getting to know the game, the process and concept; that’s part of the enjoyment.”

NJ uses a standard headset and PC equipment. “There are headsets that vibrate when people in the game are nearby but they’re expensive,” says NJ. “There are challenges being deaf. Background noise and music make it hard to hear audio cues, like footsteps or gunshots behind you.”

As NJ uses his eyes more than his ears, he’s more reliant on the visual aspect of gaming and says: “I tend to have faster response times in catching people that my teammates will miss, and I’ve developed an incredible game sense. I’ve sharpened my tools of mechanical skill and awareness through practice and watching top players.

“When you get really good, other gamers watch you online, how you’re playing, ask questions – you’re basically coaching them.”

NJ is now ranked in the top 4% of players in Europe. He’s aiming for the top 1% (around 500 people) of gamers in Europe and the USA, and

moving into other games too. He also creates content, live streaming gaming on Twitch (a kind of gaming social media platform), where he has a large following. He happily fields questions on there about how he can hear, wear headphones and speak, given that he’s deaf.


“I want people to see that ‘this deaf guy’ is doing really well against ‘normal’ people, that disability doesn’t prevent you achieving difficult things,” says NJ. “It’ll take time but it’s not impossible. Deaf people are not included. I know some deaf players with no cochlear implants or hearing aids – I have so much respect for them.

“I want to educate people, spread deaf awareness amongst the gaming community and others, and in particular to educate and work with game developers about improving accessibility for deaf people. The aim is to make sure we can play competitive games to a level where having voice communications is not a necessity and audio visualisers are available so other deaf people can see the audio on their screen. I want closed captions, BSL and other sign languages simultaneously – in gaming, YouTube, everywhere.”

Last summer NJ featured on a YouTube video promoting deaf awareness in the gaming industry which got 80,000 views. He has big ambitions for the short-term in gaming and for his long-term career, which he plans on discovering by trying out lots of things.

“I predict soon I’ll be a partnered content creator,” says NJ. “It’ll boost my content creation, I’ll start on YouTube and other platforms. There’s no limit to my ambition. I’m also interested in music production as a possible path, making an increased presence of disability in several communities.

“I’ve not always been included – in my family, in school meetings. Even when people try hard, they get tired of relaying information. I want all deaf children and young people not to be left out, especially in gaming.”

“To think we worried he’d never speak or pass any exams,” Monika adds. “Now look at him! We tried to give him every chance. Now his destiny is in his hands. The sky’s the limit.” 



For more information about accessing gaming, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/gaming-headsets.



YOUNG PEOPLE 15-18

Your spring checklist

✓ Technology Test Drive

Looking to invest in a new piece of technology, but not sure what to choose? The Technology Test Drive can help you try before you buy. We can lend you equipment suitable for deaf children and young people to help you find what works for your family. www.ndcs.org.uk/test-drive



✓ #DeafActiveOnline

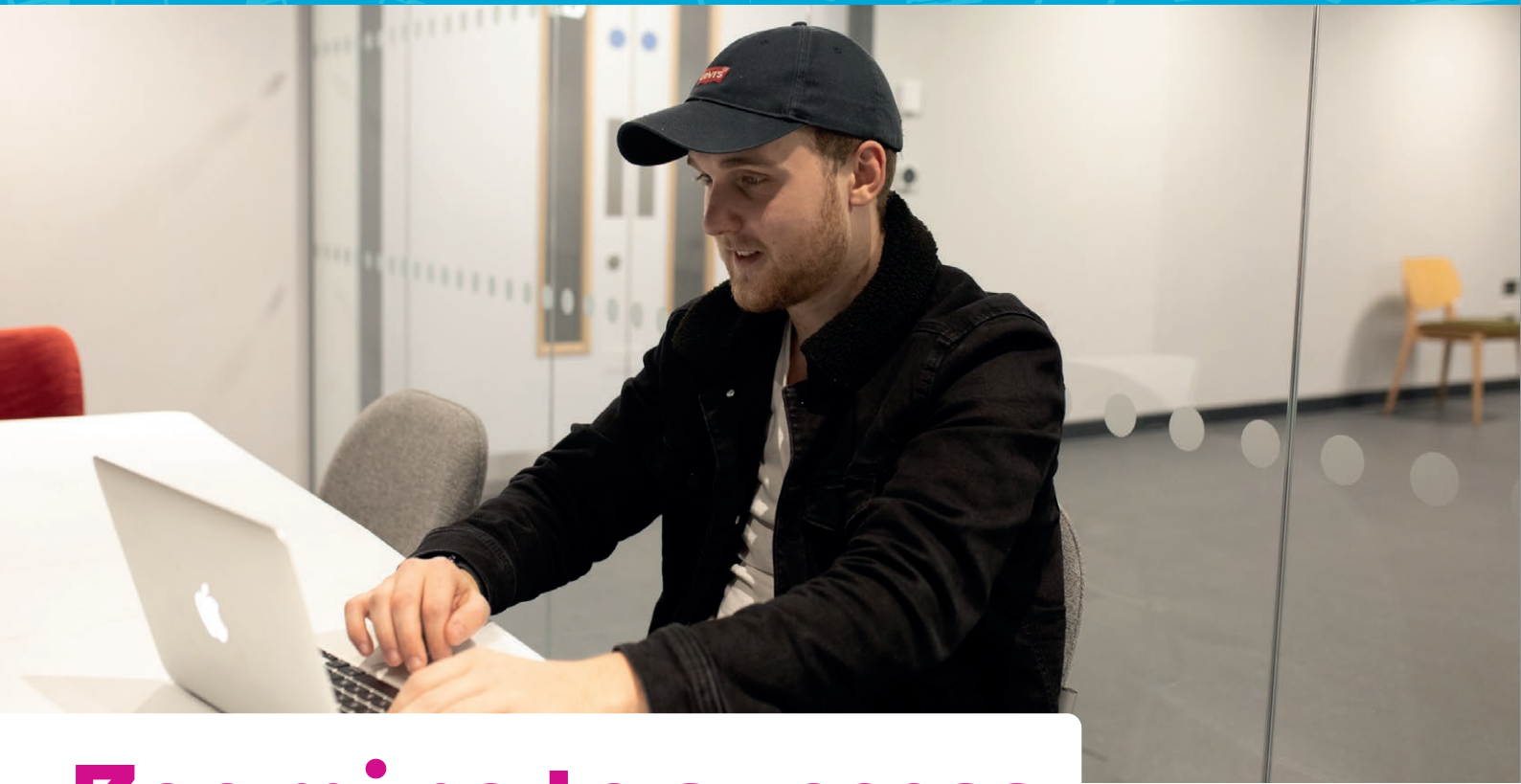
It’s hard to stay active during lockdown, especially when many online fitness activities aren’t deaf-friendly, but doing even a small amount of exercise can give our mental and emotional health a big boost. Visit the UK Deaf Sport website for deaf-friendly online exercise classes to suit every ability, from gentle stretches to high intensity workouts. www.ukdeafsport.org.uk/deafactiveonline



✓ Moving to adult audiology services

If your child is preparing to move to adult audiology, you might feel unsure about what to expect. Your child should be offered an appointment with adult audiology services before paediatrics discharge them. We have more information about what to expect at www.ndcs.org.uk/audiology.





Zooming to success

By Abbi Brown

Talented musician Adam is making the best of studying his university music course online.



Adam's story
how he's coping with online university



“ Lockdown made it easier to connect with other students because we were all used to communicating online.

AS HE CHATS AWAY IN THE STUDIO WHERE HE'S WORKING ON A NEW TRACK, ADAM'S OUTLOOK ON LIFE SEEMS TO BE A WORLD AWAY FROM WHERE HE WAS THIS TIME LAST YEAR.

“In the first week of lockdown I broke up with my girlfriend, who I'd been with for years and years,” remembers Adam.

“Then we found out that my uncle had cancer.”

At the time, Adam was finishing his music BTEC. When his college suddenly closed, the students were initially told that the work they had saved on college computers couldn't be sent home.

“It felt like everything was falling apart,” says Adam, who is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids. “All my support was gone. I didn't know if we'd finish the BTEC or if all that work had been for nothing. I lost my motivation. It was hard to keep working when I didn't know what was around the corner. I was at a real low point.”

It was a friend from church who helped Adam to refocus. “Church is a big part of my life,” says Adam. “It was actually a drummer from church who inspired me to become a musician. He gave me lessons for free.

“I talked to a friend from church about how I was feeling at the beginning of lockdown. After that, we spoke on the phone every week to check in.”

Before lockdown, Adam had applied to several universities to study Popular Music, a course which requires good grades, as well as a successful audition. After gaining new motivation, Adam decided to reject the other universities and aim for Leeds Conservatoire.

“It was a very risky move!” he laughs. “I just thought, ‘I'm confident I can get there.’”

Luckily, the risk paid off. After a frantic few days trying to access his final teacher-awarded grades after a problem with the system on results day, Adam was thrilled to be offered an

Having a notetaker is really motivating.

audition at Leeds. “Long story short, I got in!”

Adam’s family live near Leeds, so he was able to continue living at home when he began his course in September. Before starting, he got to know other students online.

“I think lockdown made it easier to connect with other students because we were all used to communicating online,” he says. “Someone set up a group chat of new students going to Leeds Conservatoire, so I jumped on that. We had a few Zoom calls and even a Zoom party!”

“One of the other students on my course is a DJ, so he connected his DJ stuff up to his computer, added some flashing lights in the background and then we all had a party over Zoom. It was great, it was really fun! It made settling into uni a lot easier because I’d already met so many people beforehand. I think I would have struggled without that.”

In addition to Zoom parties, most of Adam’s course is also online. “We go into uni one day a week to do an ensemble class,” says Adam. “That’s really cool because I get to jam with the other students. We get to know one another a bit more, too. But the rest of the course is online. For me, it’s all about finding a routine.”

Fortunately, Adam has found the Conservatoire supportive. Adam’s mum is also deaf and works in special educational needs, so he knew he could ask for the help he needs. During his audition, Adam explained that he struggles to hear speech, and was directed to a disability adviser.

“The disability adviser asked what support I’d need and explained all the ways they could help,” says Adam. “They took my name and said they’d email if I got in. And as soon as I got in, they sent me an email saying everything was arranged!”

The Conservatoire provided Adam with a radio aid and a notetaker who takes notes for him during Zoom calls, so that he can focus on what’s being said. Adam’s classmates use the hand emoji function on Zoom to show when they want to speak, so he knows who to focus on. His tutors send him their

PowerPoint presentations in advance, and also record their Zoom conferences.


“It’s great,” says Adam. “If I’ve missed something, I can go back and watch it again. Having a notetaker is really motivating too, because knowing someone else has taken the time to write the notes motivates me to do the work after the class. That kind of support has made all the difference.”

Although Adam’s enjoying his course, he’s aware that there are limits to what they can do online. “Our masterclasses are all online,” he explains. “It feels like you may as well be watching it on YouTube. Masterclasses are taught by famous musicians, but you can’t ask for advice or get to know them like you would in person.

“When all this is over, the main thing I’m looking forward to is getting to meet up with my friends, create live music, go to open mic nights and just play my heart out.”

A keen drummer, guitarist, violinist and singer, Adam’s even sponsored by the Osmonds through their charity, Hearing Fund UK. “Every year, I perform at this posh gala they have. I get to meet loads of different celebrities. It’s really cool!”

Despite the restrictions, Adam thinks the pandemic actually encouraged him to go to university.

“Lockdown made me realise how much I needed to focus on myself,” he says. “It was a struggle but I overcame it and good things came out of it. I’ve learned you have to love what you’re doing. You have to follow your passion.” 



For more advice about applying to university, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/highereducation.



YOUNG PEOPLE 19-25

Your spring checklist

✓ Student Minds

With so much disruption this year, many students might find themselves struggling to manage their mental health.

Student Minds is a mental health charity dedicated to helping university students access the resources and support they need. www.studentminds.org.uk



✓ Tech at work

Whether your child is just starting out in a new career or looking for more support in an existing job, there are lots of ways technology can help. Check out our technology case studies to find out how other deaf people use technology to help them succeed in the workplace. www.ndcs.org.uk/tech-at-work



✓ SignHealth

SignHealth is a charity dedicated to making sure deaf people get the same access as hearing people to healthcare and health information. It has the country’s largest collection of signed videos on physical and mental health issues, as well as first aid. www.signhealth.org.uk



How do I...

keep my child safe online?

With so much of our lives being lived online at the moment, it's especially important to make sure children and young people know how to use the internet safely. Three families told us how they keep everyone safe online.

It became harder to monitor Jazzy's internet use when she got her first mobile phone.



Jazzy (21) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

I started my YouTube channel when I was 16. Luckily, my parents were really supportive. They didn't really understand what YouTube was until I got invited to do a workshop for deaf people and started working with different brands. They realised how important YouTube is for developing my deaf identity and raising deaf awareness.

I've had some experiences online which made me feel unsafe, like receiving threatening comments on my videos. The internet isn't perfect; there are some people who sit behind

the computer typing horrible things about other people because they have nothing better to do. I just ignore and block those users as they're not worth it!

My advice is to enjoy using the internet but don't share any personal information online. Don't respond to hate messages or online bullying as it could make things worse. Simply block and report the accounts. And don't ever believe the bully! Websites such as YouTube can be a great way to tell stories about your deaf life, share experiences and inspire others. Just make sure your channel is a safe place.



Jazzy



Melanie is mum to Jazzy (21) who is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

Jazzy started using the internet when she was 11. I made sure that the sites she used were age-appropriate. At the time, Jazzy asked me to check her English when she wrote most things so I could see what was going on.

It became harder to monitor Jazzy's internet use when she got her first mobile phone. Sometimes she'd get upset over arguments with people online, so I'd remove her phone or get her to block them.

When Jazzy started her YouTube channel, I didn't have any concerns as I always helped her edit subtitles so could see what was going on.



Melanie

However, after she'd been using her channel for a year or so, she got some extremely nasty comments. They were particularly worrying as they all came from the same user. We blocked the person and filed a complaint with YouTube. When you put yourself out there online, you have to be aware there can be some unpleasant people and comments.

Despite this, if your child wants to set up a YouTube channel, I would encourage you to let them. It gives them a voice that they might feel they don't otherwise have. Having a creative platform enables them to grow and become more confident. They might also develop new skills like filming, editing and subtitling. All in all, I believe it's a great thing for a young person to do.

Emma is mum to Bethany (12), Ben (9) and Bobby (1). Bobby is mildly to moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.

Since the first lockdown in March, we've been using the internet a lot more. We've had medical appointments over Zoom and been learning sign language on YouTube. I've also participated in online sessions with the National Deaf Children's Society, which have been brilliant. Bethany and Ben have their school work set online now, play games and use the internet to find music videos for Bobby to watch.

Bobby is only a baby so he doesn't use the internet by himself, but we've learned lots of things to prepare us to keep Bobby safe when he's older. Our iPad is used by the whole family



Bobby

and is locked by parental controls, so if Bethany and Ben give Bobby a video to watch, we know it will be appropriate. My husband monitors their online activity using Microsoft parental controls, and has weekly usage reports sent to our email accounts. If the kids try to access blocked pages, the parental control alerts our phones. The WiFi also switches off each night between 7.30pm and 8am, which allows us to limit how much time they spend online.

We had an internet safety talk from our local police at our children's school. Off the back of that we made a family contract regarding internet use, and have a family rule that if the contract is broken, the WiFi will be switched off for a week. So far, it's a good deterrent!

Marsha is mum to Logan (4) who is severely to profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.

Logan has his own iPad which is connected to a Roger pen, which automatically connects to his hearing aids. My husband, who's also deaf, helped set everything up. We only let Logan use child-safe apps and games, such as YouTube Kids, Netflix Kids and learning games like Hairy Letters. We have a password to download new apps, so if he wants a new game he has to ask Mummy or Daddy first.

As Logan's still young, we sit with him while he's using the iPad, so we know which sites he's visiting and can keep an eye on the Roger pen, too. The internet is a huge part of Logan's learning now, so I'm glad we've had the practice during the pandemic to learn how to keep him safe.



Logan

I'm glad we've had the practice during the pandemic to learn how to keep Logan safe.



Next time in *Families* magazine: How do I... prepare my child for surgery?

If you have any tips, advice or suggestions to share, get in touch at magazine@ndcs.org.uk.



For more information about keeping your child safe online, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/esafety. You can also find further information at www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety.

We run an online event for families called *Staying Safe Online*. Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/events to see when you can next join in and to book your place.

Scribble

Tear out these pages, give them
creativity run

Welcome to Scribble
Club – our activity
section for deaf
children just like you.

Colour in

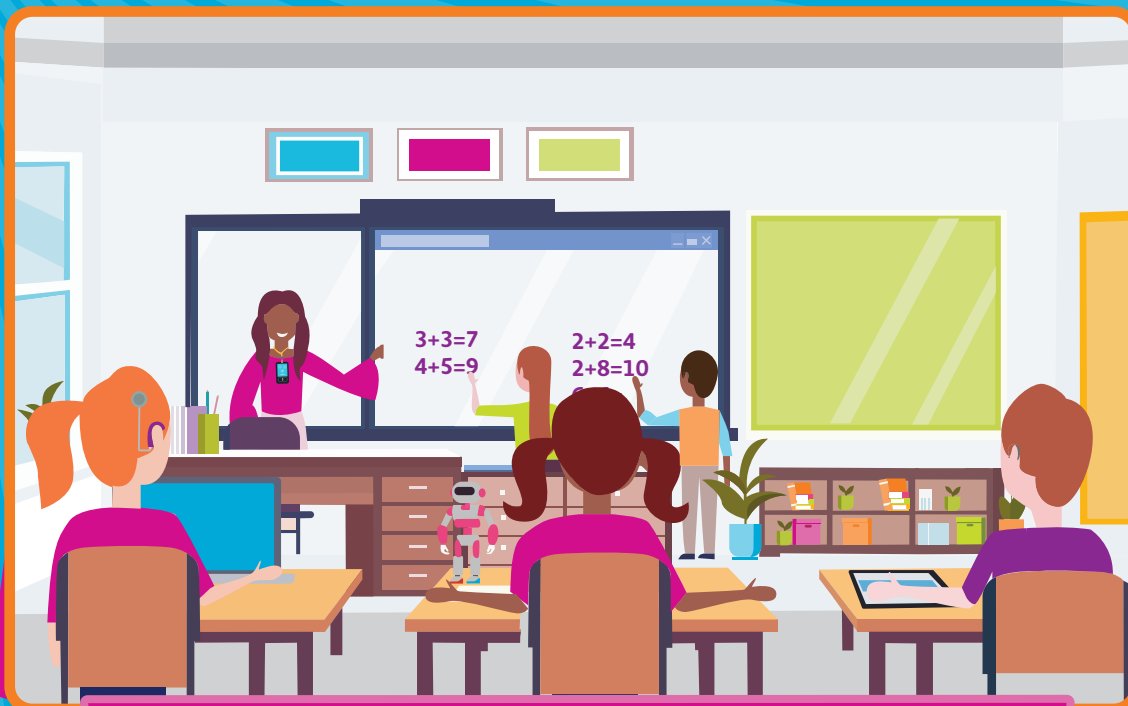


Ninja Phoenix, DJ and Fred are the Deaf Ninja Team (or DNT for short). Armed with hearing aids, special bullet bikes, and radio aids to help them communicate, they solve glue ear emergencies! Colour in the DNT and then go and watch our special animation, which tells you all about glue ear and how it can be treated, at www.ndcs.org.uk/glueear.

le Club

m to your child and let their
n wild!

Spot the difference



Look at all these children working so hard in school! They're using lots of different technology, including the interactive whiteboard, computers and tablets. But there are five differences between the two pictures above. Can you spot them all?

British Sign Language

Small Classes

Speech and Language Therapy

Teachers of the Deaf

Residential and Day Places Available

Outstanding Children's Home



Doncaster School for the Deaf

Established 1829

Leger Way, Doncaster DN2 6AY

jgoodman@ddt-deaf.org.uk | www.deaf-school.org.uk

01302 386733

See what Cued Speech UK is saying...



"This is the exact thing that, as parents, we wanted for a child like our son or someone who doesn't have full access to sound. It's all there!"
Father



"Through Cued Speech, she is now reading at an age appropriate level."
Mother



"We introduced the use of Cued Speech in our Deaf Education Centre 18 months ago and the progress the children have made has been huge!"
Primary school Teacher of the Deaf



Talk to us today about making your speech visible!
We would love to see what you're saying!
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CUED SPEECH UK
Makes spoken language visible for deaf babies, children and adults



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Rachel

Ask the expert

Each issue, a different professional shares their expert advice and gives information to help you support your child. This time Rachel Nahum, an online safety expert at Safety Net, shares her insights.

What does your job involve?

I deliver training sessions about how to keep safe online. These sessions are for professionals, parents and carers, and children and young people. I deliver in schools, community venues, residential homes, and also online. I have previously run sessions for parents of deaf children and professionals working with deaf children, exploring the additional risks for deaf children online.

What happens in the online training sessions for parents?

In the session we start by looking at where you can go for support after this session finishes. We examine the real risks online and then work through scenarios. There's discussion too, and there have been times in my sessions where we've all had to agree to disagree on areas such as screen time and the age at which children and young people should be able to use social media.

What are the most common questions you're asked by parents?

It's always: "What age do you recommend that children start using social media?" And: "What age do you think a child should have a mobile phone?"

What are your top tips for parents of deaf children to understand and support children in the online world?

Disabilities are hidden online. A hearing person and a deaf person can communicate via type/memes/emojis etc, and they don't need to disclose they're deaf. This can be incredibly empowering. However, sometimes deaf children and young people can be more vulnerable as they may misinterpret online posts or post something that could be misinterpreted

Enjoy the internet but make sure you don't share any personal information online.

by others. This can lead to bullying or continuing communication with someone who is being unkind or is undesirable.

What are the most rewarding and challenging parts of your job?

The most rewarding is working with children and empowering them to know what to do if they see something they don't like online. The most challenging is when people have very strong opposing views about children and young people and technology.

What can parents do after the training to continue to develop their skills?

There are five websites that I recommend people look at after my sessions:

- The best place to start is www.thinkuknow.co.uk.
- For reviews of games, apps and websites, visit www.commonsemmedia.org.
- To report anything worrying you, go to www.childline.org.uk.
- The most up-to-date information is found at parentzone.org.uk.
- For more information on setting parental controls, look at www.internetmatters.org.

What one piece of advice would you give to parents about e-safety

My key message in all sessions is that we must ask children and young people regularly: Do you feel safe online? Do you know where to get help if not? It's often a hugely neglected area. We need to ask questions about their online lives when things are going well, so we have the tools if things go wrong.



For more tips and advice from Safety Net, visit their website www.safety-net.org.uk.

You can find out more about keeping deaf children and young people safe online at www.ndcs.org.uk/esafety.

Online learning resources

By Emma Fraser (Teacher of the Deaf)

Over the last year, there has been an explosion in online learning tools to support your child with their education. This can be exciting but also overwhelming, so here are some suggestions and ideas to help you and your child work out what kind of online learning works best for them.

Virtual learning provides a whole new education path for children. Even when not home learning due to lockdown, it's a great way to add in a different platform through which your child can access and share information, practise and develop new skills, and learn alongside you or classmates, or independently. There are many advantages to online learning for deaf children including:

- opportunities to access information in a visual and engaging way through the use of multimedia, animation and video
- different ways for children to demonstrate what they have learnt without having to be good at writing
- subtitles and closed captions which not only give extra information, but can improve reading and writing skills
- the ability to stop or revisit content multiple times to help with learning and processing new information
- online glossaries to help with new language and vocabulary
- opportunities to engage with other learners online or to participate in a shared activity which can reduce feelings of anxiety and isolation.



What makes a good online learning site?

Remember, online learning, like any type of learning, comes in many different forms and there is no one platform, site, or way of delivery which works best for all deaf children. Here are some questions to think about before you and your child decide to take learning online.

- What does your child want to learn or know? Are they learning something new or practising a skill? Is the best way to do this online or would it be better to learn practically using everyday objects and experiences?
- Is the learning website accessible to your child? Your child will have specific needs, which include how they communicate and how they prefer to learn. If your child is using a huge amount of brain power to work out what they have to do to effectively use the website, they won't have much left for learning new information or practising skills.
- Does your child have the appropriate technology to make sure they can access online learning? See page 30 for more details on what technology might help your child.
- Is your child going to be learning independently or with you? Younger children learn better online if they are interacting with you at the same time, rather than being left alone.
- Is your child engaged and interested in the content of the website? As with any learning, if this is not the case, it may be worth trying another way or another website.
- Is your child safe online? Turn to page 27 for more information on this, or go to www.ndcs.org.uk/esafety.



Here are some great websites which can help deaf children with online learning:

www.kiddle.co

Kiddle is a search engine for children that's designed to make sure they can search safely. Search results are filtered to make sure they're age-appropriate, and websites written especially for children are top of the listings. Most results are illustrated with a thumbnail picture to help your child understand what they're about, and the site is written in a large, child-friendly font to make reading easier.

ed.ted.com

You might have heard of TED talks, a series of presentations or lectures by experts on wide-ranging topics. TED-Ed is the children's version. They have a wealth of videos and animations to watch on their website and many are subtitled. They vary in length, from a couple of minutes to up to 20 minutes long, and cover all ages and all sorts of educational topics, from bugs to bananas.

www.thenational.academy

Oak National Academy is an online classroom made by teachers, with free, high-quality video lessons and resources. It covers the early years, up to Year 11. All of the content is captioned and some is British Sign Language (BSL) interpreted.

www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize

You've probably heard of BBC Bitesize, they provide lessons and revision materials for children from 3 to 16. There are videos, quizzes and practice activities on the website and many of the videos are subtitled.

www.booktrust.org.uk

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. On their website, there are sections on book recommendations for a range of different groups, including children with a disability, quizzes, competitions and even book-based recipes to try, as well as activities you can print out – meaning there is something for all children to enjoy, even those who think they hate reading!

www.signedstories.com

You can download ITV's Signed Stories app to access a range of animated children's stories in BSL, including our very own children's book *The Quest for the Cockle Implant*.

www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/bsl

Teams of BSL linguists and subject specialists have created this resource which translates common words and terms you might find in your child's curriculum into BSL. Split clearly into school subjects and then topics, the glossary terms are supported by signed definitions and examples. The glossary is now also available as an app for Android and Apple devices.

www.twinkl.co.uk

Twinkl has a range of deaf awareness resources, promoting the positive aspects of deafness and social inclusion. These resources aim to teach others about deafness and also provide worksheets and lesson plans to those who work with deaf children.

Supporting your child's education this spring

✓ Is it accessible?

Making sure your child can access online learning is important. If your child is being asked to do school work online, share our deaf-friendly remote learning checklist with their teacher to help them to know how to make the content accessible. www.ndcs.org.uk/remote-learning-checklist



✓ Phonic facts

All children need to get to grips with phonics to help them learn to read and write. Deaf children can find it more difficult to acquire the sound system needed to develop literacy skills because of their hearing loss. Take a look at our webpage which gives ideas and strategies to support your child to learn phonics. www.ndcs.org.uk/phonics



✓ Career inspiration

Does your child need some career inspiration? On page 46 or on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/role-models all sorts of deaf adults tell us about their career journeys. From fashion stylists to HGV drivers, you can find out more there.



To find out more in our new web section about online learning, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/learnathome.

Turn to page 32, where two deaf children and a parent review some more education websites.



How to use radio aids and streamers when you're online

By Stuart Milligan (Technology Manager)



Radio aids and streamers can be very useful for communicating with others in noisy environments. But now your child is spending much more time learning and socialising online at a distance from others, they can still be just as handy for helping your child hear more clearly.

Radio aids

Radio aids are made up of two parts: the transmitter and the receiver. The transmitter is a microphone usually worn by the person speaking to your child. It picks up the person's voice and sends it wirelessly to the receivers that are attached to your child's hearing aids or implants. However, radio aids can be used slightly differently so they can send sounds from devices such as laptops, tablets and TVs directly to your child's hearing aids or implants as well.

Radio aids usually come with a few different cables and connectors in the box, so be sure to keep them safe as they could come in handy. These will differ for each model so it's best to refer to the user manual for exact instructions.

One popular radio aid transmitter is the **Phonak Touchscreen Mic**. Using the supplied audio cable, you can connect it to any device that has a standard headphone socket, for example a computer, tablet or phone. The Touchscreen Mic will then transmit the sound from that device to the receivers that it's connected with. So, if you

have anything that you can plug a pair of headphones in to, you should be able to connect it to the radio aid and deliver the sound directly to your child's hearing device!

Another popular radio aid transmitter is the **Roger Pen** (pictured far right). It comes with a docking station that you can connect to different sound sources that also have a standard headphone socket. As long as the Pen is in the dock, it will send the sound directly to your child's receivers.

In general, you have to use an audio cable that usually comes with the radio aid to connect it to a sound source. This is particularly good for using things which stay in one place, for example your TV or desktop computer. It's not so useful if your child is moving their laptop, tablet or mobile phone around often, as most of us are! If that's the case, or your child needs to study in different rooms and doesn't want to move cables and docking stations around with them each time, a streamer may be a better option.



Streamers

A streamer is a product that can also connect to different things around the house, but usually does so wirelessly. So if a laptop, tablet or mobile phone is Bluetooth enabled, your child should be able to use a streamer to hear the sounds that it produces. For this to work you need to 'pair' the sound source with your child's streamer, and then pair the streamer with their hearing aids or implants.

Don't worry if any of your devices aren't Bluetooth enabled, as most streamers still allow you to use an audio cable to connect to anything with a headphone socket, like a radio aid does. Although some additional accessories may be required, it will depend on the model of streamer you have.

Most hearing device manufacturers have streamers which only work with

their own brand of hearing devices – so it's important to remember that they can't be used with other makes. For example, **Phonak's ComPilot streamer** only works with Phonak hearing aids, whereas **Cochlear's Mini Mic 2 streamer** only works with Cochlear implants.

A streamer turns your child's hearing aids or cochlear implants into wireless headphones.

So, your child could listen to music, watch videos or take part in video calls or online lessons without the need to be within a cable length of their laptop or tablet. It also means that the sound quality should be better, as the sound is going directly to your child's hearing aid or implant rather than coming through a speaker.

Top tips

- Think about how and where your child will use a radio aid or streamer when you're deciding which one to get – this will help you to make a good choice.
- Don't forget streamers can only be used with hearing aids or implants made by the same manufacturer.
- You can try out different radio aids and streamers using our Technology Test Drive; this will allow your child to see if it works for them before you spend any money. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/technology-loans to find out more.

How a streamer works



Roger Pen



If you use the products mentioned in this article, the microphone on a hearing aid or implant may become muted so that the only sound heard is via the radio aid or streamer. This is useful for getting good sound quality in noisy rooms, but remember that it would then be difficult for your child to hear environmental sounds, such as doorbells and smoke alarms.

If you're new to these products and not sure which would work with your child's hearing technology, we'd recommend that you contact your Teacher of the Deaf or audiologist to discuss which would be best for your child. Of course, the Technology team at the National Deaf Children's Society is always here to help too, so please get in touch at technology@ndcs.org.uk or call our Helpline on 0808 800 8880.



To see how both radio aids and streamers work visually, visit our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/ndcswebteam and search 'radio aids' or 'streamers'.

Website special

Websites for deaf children... tell us what you think!



Would you or your child like to write a review for Families magazine? Email magazine@ndcs.org.uk.

→ Key

This resource is most suitable for the following ages:

0-4

5-10

11-14

15-18

19-25

Parents

Twinkl

www.twinkl.co.uk

From £4.49/month

0-4

5-10

11-14

15-18



We've had a subscription to Twinkl for four years and have found it invaluable for Elijah's education in general, but specifically his language and communication development. As part of our subscription, we receive a Twinkl original book (from a choice of three levels) every half term to read and enjoy together. Then, we print off related resources, from finger puppets for story sacks, Play-Doh mats and role play aids when he was younger, to numeracy and literacy worksheets now. This has helped Elijah learn new words and develop a love for books, as well as helping memory and other skills. Many of the stories' illustrations include children wearing hearing aids and even a teacher with a radio aid.

Twinkl has a phonics scheme which takes you through the letters and 'family' of letters with coordinating pictures, in fun interactive lessons on PowerPoint, games and worksheets. There are also British Sign Language posters which we have used with other resources.

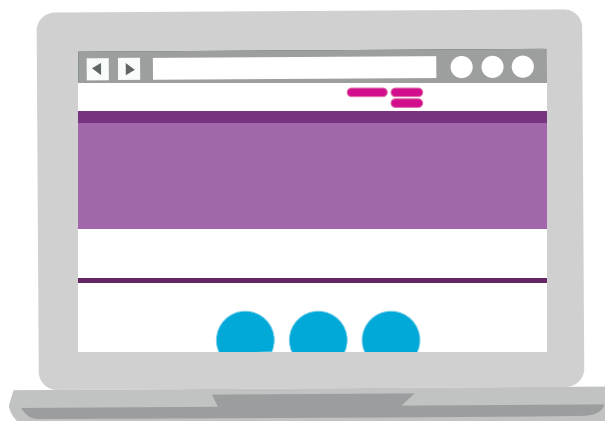
As a home educator, I love that you're able to search for topics that the child is interested in, plus a specific learning target, for example, pirates and multiplication. This helps create positive, fun engagement for the child, which is when they learn best. We also enjoy the board games you can print, as well as Twinkl Go, an online resource where the parent can add specific games for the child to access with a code. This is good for practising already learnt skills, however the computerised voice for letter sounds is sometimes difficult to decipher with hearing aids. On a positive note, there's a repeat button and there are no background jingles, unlike other online educational apps we use.

Elijah says his favourite part of Twinkl is Twinkl Go because of the fun games and the mystery workbooks. He has also enjoyed the baking, singing and science experiments which are available.

Rachael is mum to Elijah (8) who is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.



Elijah



CBBC Newsround

www.bbc.co.uk/newsround

Free

0-4

5-10

11-14

15-18



I really like the CBBC website, especially the Newsround page because it has updates every day and I like listening to the news. There are lots of videos about deaf awareness and deaf children which I like because it makes people more aware. The videos which aren't about deaf awareness don't have any options for subtitles or sign language support. I can hear the news but it would be easier if subtitles were available. It's more difficult when they're talking whilst showing something and I can't see the person's face. The news articles encourage you to be kind and help others.

I also like playing the games that they upload every day. They're easy to play and give instructions as you go along. They're really fun and sometimes you learn new things whilst playing the fact games. Me and my friends enjoy doing the quizzes together.

The website is quite easy to get around and I like to use the search box to find games and articles.

Megan (8) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.



Megan

Seneca Learning

www.senecalearning.com

Free

11-14

15-18



Throughout the first lockdown, I was able to use the website Seneca Learning to supplement my GCSE studies and I used it to revise for my mocks in January. Seneca is a free-to-use online platform, which allows students to revise content covered both in GCSEs and A-Levels.

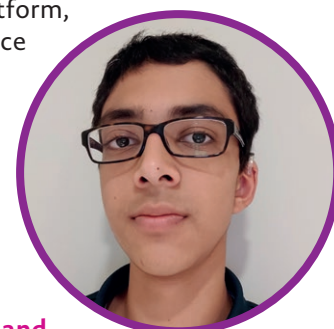
One of the reasons I found it so useful was the extensive coverage of different exam boards and curriculums on the platform. All common GCSE subjects are included, along with their respective curriculum, and it's this adherence to the specific curriculum of each exam board, in my opinion, that makes it more appealing than other platforms such as BBC Bitesize, which only provides generalised resources for each subject.

Once you navigate past the main menu and choose which subject you want to study, you have a choice of which topic to focus on. Seneca uses a variety of visual techniques, such as gap-fills, scrolling bullet points and short, sharp bursts of exam questions, to either teach you new information or reinforce knowledge that you've already picked up in class.

It should be noted that the most effective way to revise using Seneca is not just to steam through all the content at once, never to return to the platform, but instead to gradually reinforce your knowledge over time, through repeating the learning process for a specific topic multiple times. This helps increase what Seneca refers to as your 'memory strength'.

I would highly recommend Seneca, it has helped me a lot.

Adam (15) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.



Adam

Helpline

“ I’m a single parent, with two deaf children. Things have always been difficult money-wise but even more so at the moment. Everything seems to be moving online and I’m worried we’re being left behind. We don’t have a laptop, just my mobile phone, which the kids have to share when they’re off school. I asked the school about laptops but they said they don’t have enough. Are there any other options?”



Although many local authorities and other bodies have provided laptops and tablets for children through the government laptop scheme, unfortunately there haven't been enough. Many schools have also been able to give out laptops, but lots of schools have had far fewer available than needed. Even though your children's school can't help, there are other options you can try. You can apply to grants and crisis funds for laptops for kids, particularly to help them with school work. Some of these are time-limited and might depend on where in the UK you live, along with other eligibility criteria. Here are some other places that might be able to help:

- Family Fund (www.familyfund.org.uk): The fund provides grants to families with disabled or seriously ill children and young people in the UK. This money can be used to cover the costs of laptops.
- The Birkdale Trust (www.grantsforthe deaf.co.uk): The trust provides grants for deaf children specifically to support with education needs. You could apply to the trust for a laptop.
- Turn2Us (www.turn2us.org.uk): You can search their database for grants your family might be eligible for.

There are also benefits available which may help with these costs. If you're eligible, you should be receiving Carer's Allowance, and hopefully your children are already receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments, depending on their age. These can help cover ongoing costs, such as internet access at home. For home internet access it can also make a big difference to shop around for the best deal or try a personal WiFi hotspot, which can be cheaper.

There's help available to learn new digital skills too. The government launched a Skills Toolkit which you can find at: theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk. Learn My Way (www.goodthingsfoundation.org/learn-my-way) may also be useful – it has free, accessible courses to help you learn how to use the internet and stay safe and connected.

What's new?

Genetic counselling

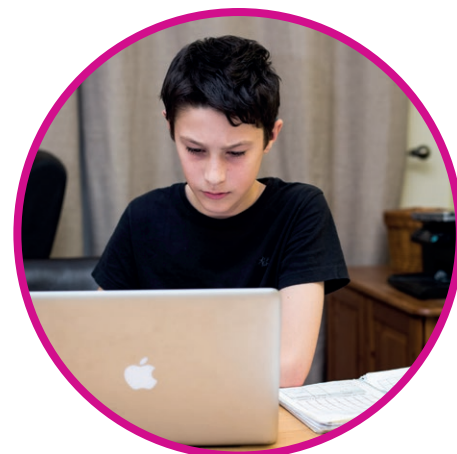
What type of information is it?

A digital update of the information previously found in the printed booklet *Genetic Counselling: Information for families*. You can find it on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/geneticcounselling.

Who's it for? These web pages have been created to help all families of deaf children, especially those who are considering genetic counselling or those who are currently undergoing testing.

What's it about? The web content is an introduction to the genetic counselling process. It covers topics such as the basics around genetic counselling for deafness, how a genetics referral can help your family and what happens when you go to the hearing clinic.

You might also like: Our feature from a previous issue of *Families* magazine where we spoke to parents Sarah and Oli about their family's experience of genetic testing. You can read it online at www.ndcs.org.uk/jessica-genetic-testing.



How Technology Can Help: For families of deaf children 0–5

What type of information is it?

An updated printed booklet available to download from www.ndcs.org.uk/tech-guide-early-years.

Who's it for? This information guide is for families of deaf children between the ages of 0 and 5.

What's it about? This guide introduces a wide range of products and technologies that might be helpful to your baby, toddler or pre-school-aged child at home, in nursery, in childcare or at pre-school.

You might also like: Our revised and updated technology web section. You can read information on products and services, advice on how to access technology, and information on how technology works. Find this online at www.ndcs.org.uk/technology.



Deaf children and support in the classroom

What type of information is it?

A new video available to watch online. To find it, search 'classroom' on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/ndcswebteam.

Who's it for? The video is for families of deaf children of school age who might be looking for more information on types of assistive technology that can be used in school settings.

What's it about? The video explains how radio aids and soundfield systems can be used in classrooms to help deaf children. We hear from a teacher, parents and a Teacher of the Deaf on how these types of technology have helped their children.

You might also like: Our Borrow to Buy scheme which lets you try the latest Phonak radio aids and streamers for 60 days for free. Find out more at www.ndcs.org.uk/technology-loans.



 Freephone 0808 800 8880

 helpline@ndcs.org.uk

 www.ndcs.org.uk/helpline

Join Our Community

We've launched a parents' forum where you can chat to other parents of deaf children about anything you like! To get started, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community and create a new account.



We have lots more information booklets and factsheets available for download on our website. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/resources to find out more.



St John's
Catholic Specialist School

Supporting children and young people

2020 was to be a very exciting year at St John's Catholic School for the Deaf as it celebrated its 150th anniversary in a series of wonderful events. But COVID-19 and the unique challenges it brought meant some plans couldn't go ahead – but all is not lost, there's still lots to celebrate at St John's! Head Teacher Ann Bradbury tells us more.

Everyone at St John's was so excited for 2020. We started the celebrations of our 150th year in September 2019 with a Bishop's Mass and a very special Christmas Fair. We were just getting started with a packed programme of events for students, families, colleagues, our community and professionals.

We were due to host an exciting learning event for professionals, as well as hosting the village summer gala, a special Victorian Day for local schools and other events, all aimed at celebrating our milestone birthday. They were to culminate in launching our brand new name in September 2020. It soon became clear that, temporarily, most of those exciting plans would have to go on hold.

But we were able to press ahead with one – we have a brand new name! We have, for many years, been known as St John's Catholic School for the Deaf after the school was founded by Monsignor Desiree de Hearne, a Belgian priest who, after working with a family of deaf children in his parish and discovering how limited their educational opportunities were, decided to found a school to meet their needs. For many years the vast majority of children and young people supported by the school were deaf and the school was purely residential in nature.

However, over the years, the school has evolved to meet children's changing needs and we know that the way our school is designed - with calming and quiet environments, small class sizes and teaching which focuses on the emotional well-being and development of the child, along with our on-site therapeutic input including speech and language therapy and audiology, means we can offer a really effective educational choice for children with a range of different needs, not just those who are deaf.

As a result, today the school – including our Sixth Form and Ofsted Outstanding residential provision - supports children and young people aged from four to 19. Our community includes pupils who are deaf, hearing impaired or who have multi-sensory and communication difficulties, some of whom are hearing. We also support young people who have autism spectrum conditions. We offer both day and residential placements too.

To reflect that change in the needs of the children we support, we felt the time was right to evolve our name to better represent what we do and St John's Catholic Specialist School Boston Spa was born!



When we hosted our 150th anniversary Mass, Reverend David Arblaster, the Vice Chair of Governors at St John's, said:



“The school has a national reputation for providing an education to support young people to achieve a happy and successful adult life.

“I have witnessed the outstanding work of staff in teaching, guiding and supporting our pupils in developing all their talents to the full.

“I have seen the amazing changes that have come about as our young people develop their language and communication skills, and the confidence with which they leave this school as they take their place in the wider world.”



The school has a long and magnificent history and we are building on the legacy of Monsignor de Hearne. Our students continue to inspire us and make sure no two days are ever the same - they teach us far more than we could ever teach them!

We are looking forward to 2021 and plan to hold all of those celebratory events in what will now be our 151st year. Not a typical anniversary to celebrate, I know. But then, St John's has never been a typical school and now how special we are is “baked” right into our name!

GET IN CONTACT:



info@stjohns.org.uk



01937 842144



www.stjohns.org.uk



[stjohns4thedeaf](https://twitter.com/stjohns4thedeaf)



[stjohnsschoolforthe deaf](https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsschoolforthe deaf)

Being part of an online group

Laura is mum to Noah (1) who's profoundly deaf. They joined Northern Ireland's Sound Friends in March 2020.



Noah

"Noah failed his newborn hearing screening at birth and our audiologist told us about the National Deaf Children's Society and your local support groups. We were getting a lot of support professionally, but it was overwhelming. We have no family history of deafness so this was a new experience for us all. I wanted to speak to families who felt how we did, had experienced diagnosis from birth, could share their experiences and give us some advice.

Joining the group, I was initially very nervous because I had so many questions and didn't know if others would think they were silly. I really didn't need to be nervous; they've all been so kind, supportive and reassuring. We've done quizzes, themed parties, Pilates, all via Zoom. There's also a private members' Facebook group to ask questions at any time.

I would tell others not to be put off just because access is virtual. Support and advice are always available."

Caroline is mum to Rory (11), who's mildly to moderately deaf. They joined Peterborough and District Deaf Children's Society last July.



Rory

"Rory's hearing loss was only diagnosed two years ago. We were told about our local group after attending British Sign Language (BSL) classes with him and thought it would be a good way to practise BSL. Rory doesn't have any deaf peers and is used to being different, but it can be difficult. Lockdown meant we had some spare time for once!

I felt apprehensive at the start, partly because of the technology. It can be confusing to join a meeting on Zoom. We also didn't know the people involved, which made me more nervous. Rory joined their online summer school, he did an activity every day of the week – from a magician's workshop to cooking classes and PE. He loved it and got to know the other children quickly.

It was a little disappointing not being able to meet face-to-face but the best thing was finding a deaf peer group for Rory. Now he can see how normal hearing aids are."

Jacqueline (16) is severely deaf and joined West Scotland Deaf Children's Society in October.



Jacqueline

"My Teacher of the Deaf put me in touch with my local group and I wanted to join to meet others like me. I was very nervous at first but it made me very happy to see and meet other deaf people. It made me feel less isolated during the pandemic too.

We met on Zoom and it went really well. There were no technical difficulties and it's always easy to access the meet-ups. It's so much fun and I find it very convenient.

I would definitely encourage others to join a local group, even if they can only join online. It's fun and informative, and the group leaders are always free for a chat."



➔ To find a group in your area, check out our map at www.ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup. Most groups are currently running online and have Facebook groups.

Whether you want to join a group, become a volunteer or even set up your own group, we're here to help. If you'd like to know more, get in touch with the team at connecting.families@ndcs.org.uk.

Coming soon to a screen near you...

Until it's safe for the Roadshow team to hit the road again, we're bringing our workshops to children and young people across the UK digitally.

Why not ask your child's school, college or youth club if they'd like a virtual visit from us? We can deliver sessions on:

- technology
- emotional health and wellbeing
- deaf identity
- e-safety
- deaf awareness (for hearing children and young people)
- Deaf Works Everywhere – advice and information for young people transitioning from school, college or university
- and lots more!

Why not try our special Make a Change workshop too? It offers deaf young people an opportunity to develop a project to raise awareness or improve accessibility in their local community with support from the National Deaf Children's Society and funding of up to £500!

If you'd like to arrange a workshop at home for your child and a group of their friends, we can arrange an evening or weekend time to suit you too.

All workshops are delivered by our Roadshow team, who are deaf themselves, and hosted on a digital platform that works best for the group. And, of course, they're completely free.

We think they're great, but don't just take our word for it...

"The workshop was really good and it gave our deaf children a good morale boost to see their classmates doing the workshop too."

Diane Ritchie, teacher at Anna Ritchie School.

"I've never spoken to other deaf people who have the same difficulties as me."

Deaf pupil at Angus School.



If you'd like to find out more about our digital workshops or register your interest, visit our website www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow or email us on roadshow@ndcs.org.uk.



Rebecca and Hannah

Our events for parents, carers and families

All our events are interactive and offer information, support, and the opportunity to share experiences with other parents and carers. We're currently offering the below events online.

- Navigating Benefits
- Supporting Parents New to Hearing Loss
- Technology
- Education
- Post 16–18 Options
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Hearing Care at Home
- Online Coffee Mornings and Afternoons
- Raising a Deaf Child: Including sleep, behaviour, communication and staying safe online
- Family Sign Language: For families with deaf children aged 0–11
- Expert Parent Programme: Getting the best outcomes for my child
- Parents as Partners

All our online events are free, with closed captioning and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. Places are limited, so booking is essential. For full details of all our events, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/events or, if you don't have access to the internet, call our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880**.

Learning more

Rebecca's daughter Hannah (9 months) was diagnosed as profoundly deaf at her newborn hearing screening during the first lockdown last year. Since then, she's attended a few of our virtual events and learnt a lot about raising a deaf child.

"We were very new to deafness. Our first experience of the National Deaf Children's Society was through the website. I was nervous to join the events, but felt the sooner we jumped in, the better. The first one we attended was the New to Hearing Loss virtual event.

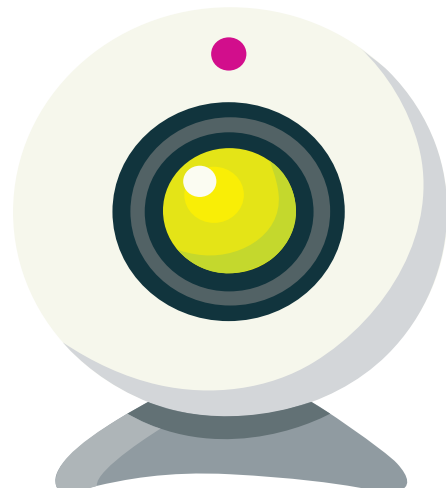
We started in a large group, were introduced to the staff and the topic, then moved to a smaller breakout room with one of the team for more informal conversations. I met another couple of mums who I formed a WhatsApp group with afterwards.

Since then, I've been to a few more events. There's a great range of topics – I went to the Technology session twice so I could take in all the information! And I try to make as many of the coffee mornings as I can as I really enjoy the informal conversations and community feel.

I've been given great advice and everyone is so approachable. You don't need to speak and share your story if you don't want to, but there's an opportunity to do so.

I'm so grateful to everyone at the National Deaf Children's Society for embracing the online set-up. The events are easy to access, incredibly informative, and so well structured."

I really enjoy the informal conversations and community feel.



Writing her way to success

Rebekah (10) is moderately to severely deaf and wears bone-anchored hearing aids. She recently attended our online Creative Writing Workshop and got to write her own story with the help of other deaf young people and author Sarah Driver.

“When my Mum told me the National Deaf Children’s Society was running a creative writing workshop, I wanted to apply straight away. My favourite pastime is reading. When I read, I am transported to another world and can’t stop turning the pages. Last year I read over 1.5 million words in school!

I felt really excited to take part and the workshop was great! All the staff and helpers were lovely and welcoming. My springer spaniel Louis enjoyed it too! We’re best friends and he laid at my feet the whole time.

We started the workshop by introducing ourselves. Everyone was given a chance to take part. We talked about our ideas and then started writing the opening to a book.

I can’t choose a favourite part of the workshop – I loved it all! I learned new ways to get a reader’s interest and loved having fun with other deaf children like me. When I have video calls with clubs I belong to, it can be hard to keep up if everyone is talking at once. This event had subtitles and it was awesome.

The workshop was even better than I expected and I would love to take part in another one again!”

Rebekah’s mum Jennifer adds:

“It was wonderful for Rebekah to connect with other deaf children. This is something we have not been able to do recently.

When the session began, I dropped a tear of joy. Having a session run by staff who are deaf aware and understand communication difficulties was a contrast. Usually, I have to stay nearby to help Rebekah during online sessions with any bits she has missed. This time it was relaxing for us both. What a difference deaf awareness makes!

I would encourage other parents and young people thinking about signing up to a digital event to just do it! The team are so supportive. The benefits of your child meeting other deaf children are encouraging and gives a sense of belonging.”

“I loved having fun with other deaf children like me.”



Rebekah

Our events for children and young people

Our face-to-face events for children and young people are currently on hold due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, we are continuing to run online events. For full details of these and to check when our face-to-face events will be running again, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/events or, if you don’t have access to the internet, call our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880**.

If you’d like to tell us your thoughts or have an idea for an event you would like us to offer, please email enable@ndcs.org.uk.



122 Football Club Jigsaw Puzzles

Special Introductory Offer!
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SPECIAL OFFER!

All puzzles are updated for 2020!

Each one is available as a 400 piece puzzle.

There are an amazing 122 clubs to collect. Each different jigsaw features a stunningly illustrated cartoon image of a football club, with club honours, fabulous facts and so much more. All 91 clubs in the top four divisions in England are available, as well as various non-league clubs and 18 teams from Scotland.

The finished puzzles are an impressive 47cm x 32cm when built and all are available as a 400 piece puzzle (ages 7 to adult).



Is your team available? Choose from any of these!

- | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Aberdeen | Burnley | Doncaster Rovers | Hereford FC | Middlesbrough | Preston North End | Stockport County |
| Accrington Stanley | Burton Albion | Dundee | Hibernian | Millwall | Queens Park Rangers | Stoke City |
| AFC Bournemouth | Bury | Dundee Utd | Huddersfield Town | MK Dons | Raith Rovers | Sunderland |
| AFC Wimbledon | Cambridge Utd | Dunfermline | Hull City | Morecambe | Rangers | Swansea City |
| Arsenal | Cardiff City | Eastleigh | Inverness CT | Motherwell | Reading | Swindon Town |
| Aston Villa | Carlisle Utd | Everton | Ipswich Town | Newcastle Utd | Rochdale | Tottenham Hotspur |
| Barnet | Celtic | Exeter City | Kilmarnock | Newport County | Ross County | Tranmere Rovers |
| Barnsley | Charlton Athletic | Falkirk | Leeds Utd | Northampton Town | Rotherham Utd | Walsall |
| Birmingham City | Chelsea | FC Utd Of Manchester | Leicester City | Norwich City | Salford City | Watford |
| Blackburn Rovers | Cheltenham Town | Fleetwood Town | Leyton Orient | Nottingham Forest | Scunthorpe Utd | West Brom |
| Blackpool | Chesterfield | Forest Green Rovers | Lincoln City | Notts County | Sheffield Utd | West Ham Utd |
| Bolton Wanderers | Colchester Utd | Fulham | Liverpool | Oldham Athletic | Sheffield Wednesday | Wigan Athletic |
| Bradford City | Coventry City | Gillingham | Luton Town | Oxford Utd | Shrewsbury Town | Wolves |
| Brentford | Crawley Town | Grimsbury Town | Macclesfield Town | Peterborough | Southampton | Wrexham |
| Brighton & Hove Albion | Crewe Alexandra | Hamilton Academical | Maidstone Utd | Plymouth Argyle | Southend Utd | Wycombe Wanderers |
| Bristol City | Crystal Palace | Hartlepool Utd | Manchester City | Port Vale | St. Johnstone | Yeovil Town |
| Bristol Rovers | Derby County | Hears | Manchester Utd | Portsmouth | St. Mirren | York City |
| | | | Mansfield Town | | Stevenage | |



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Offer ends 11.59pm 31st December 2020!

Can I campaign online?

Our campaigning is led by the needs of deaf children, young people and their families, which is why we always want to include you in the meetings we have with MPs or other decision-makers. In an age of social distancing, this can be challenging, but in the last year lots of you have been able to meet and influence important people from the comfort of your own home.

Last year a group of parents in Tower Hamlets met with Apsana Begum MP and Rushanara Ali MP as part of their campaign to stop the council reducing the number of Teachers of the Deaf in the area. The meeting took place on Zoom. We asked the parents to tell us what they enjoyed about the meeting and their top tips for taking part.

Anika, mum to Alizée (7), who is mildly to severely deaf, said: "I really liked the fact that I didn't have to travel to the meeting. It was at 5pm and the traffic can be very busy at that time. I would encourage other parents to give it a try. Each child is individual and is special – just as their parents are too. Feel empowered, and if you're shy you can type in the chat function and not be seen, that's OK too. It's important not to feel judged; we all come from different backgrounds."



Alizée

Charlotte, mum to Adelaide (8), who is profoundly deaf, said: "If you're meeting as a group, it's important to choose someone to chair your meeting. The chair at our meeting was very helpful, they gave everyone the space to speak. It helped to make everyone feel confident, and it made the meeting run smoothly."



Adelaide

Husna, mum to Hamza (10), who is profoundly deaf, said: "I would say be confident in the meeting and don't be scared. Lots of parents find it difficult to raise concerns and get their voice heard but you can do it. Always work collectively as a group."



Hamza

Soon after the meeting, Tower Hamlets council announced that they would extend their consultation about the proposed cuts.

Always work collectively.

Making meetings accessible

There are several options available to help make meetings accessible for deaf people. For example, British Sign Language interpreters or palantypists can be booked to support online meetings. Or you could try using a subtling app such as Otter.ai that integrates with Zoom. You can sign up to Otter.ai for free – although you may need to choose a paid-for account to access certain features, such as live notes for Zoom meetings. You can find out more about Otter.ai and other transcribing apps at www.ndcs.org.uk/livetranscribe.

Each child is individual and is special – just as their parents are too. Feel empowered.

Feel unsure about arranging a virtual meeting? Remember that the Campaigns team can give you everything you need to set one up. Just get in touch via campaigns@ndcs.org.uk or call our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880**. We can:

- give you information about deaf children in your local area
- create a briefing about your MP's interests
- connect you with other campaigners in your area who might want to join the meeting
- pay for communication support for you and/or your deaf child to access the meeting (eg a British Sign Language interpreter or palantypist)
- answer any other questions you may have.

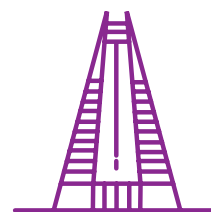
Digital good deeds



At this challenging time, we're doing everything we can to be there for deaf children. We need your support now, more than ever, to continue our vital work. Luckily, there are lots of ways to support us using only an internet connection! So, which will you choose? A challenge that requires your body, your brain or buddying up?

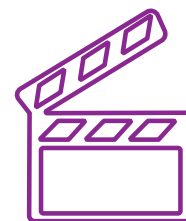
Body: Stay active

- Use your stairs to virtually run up the Shard. The iconic London building has 306 flights of stairs. Take it on over a week – that's 44 flights a day!
- If you want to feel more zen, try the yoga version of a marathon from the comfort of your own home. We've been told this is 108 sun salutations.



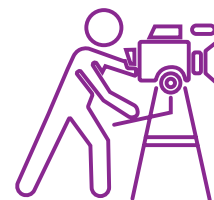
Brain: Challenge your grey cells

- Try the Fingerspellathon challenge and get sponsored to film yourself fingerspelling *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!* Share your video online and nominate your friends. Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/fingerspellathon for more information.
- Your child could be sponsored to read for a certain amount of time each day for a month. Why not try finding books with deaf characters in to inspire them at the same time?



Buddying up: Keep socialising

- Host a film night online by downloading Netflix's Teleparty extension on Google Chrome. Coordinate your film-watching with other households, and guests can donate to join. To make it even more fun, give everyone a main character's catchphrase, and make a donation every time that phrase is said!
- Hold a quiz over Zoom and get swotting up on your pub quiz knowledge. Charge for entry and extra for clues.



Whatever you get up to, you can collect sponsorship easily online using JustGiving, Facebook Donate or Virgin Money Giving. Get in touch with our team for more ideas and support at community.fundraising@ndcs.org.uk.

Be a part of #TeamNDCS and take on a once-in-a-lifetime challenge – the London Marathon!

Our charity applications are now open!

Do something incredible for deaf children and apply now at www.ndcs.org.uk/londonmarathon.

Our team of runners will receive:

- an exclusive #TeamNDCS running vest
- free pasta party the night before race day for that all-important carb loading*
- exclusive post-race reception in a prime location to celebrate with your friends and family*
- a dedicated member of our team providing one-to-one support
- a Facebook community to share training tips and experiences with your teammates
- family-friendly cheer points to give you the support you deserve on the day.*

Already have your own place for the marathon? Run for deaf children with us and you'll receive all of the above benefits too!

* Dependent on social distancing measures at the time.



Rich Forbes-Ritte, from our corporate partner the Access Group, ran the virtual London Marathon for us in October last year and raised over £4,000! He said: “Training over the summer with the early morning sunshine gave me the incentive to keep going, along with the generosity of friends, family and colleagues. When the day came I was more ready than I’d ever been. The donations had pipped over the target and there was nothing more to do than pound the streets.”



When I'm a

grown-up

Do you ever wonder what your deaf child will do when they grow up?

Deaf people share their experiences of the world of work, including how their employers and colleagues adapt to their needs.



I'm a café worker because...

I get to meet interesting people and raise awareness about deafness. I work part-time in the café at West Midland Safari and Leisure Park.

When visitors realise I'm deaf, I feel like I'm breaking down barriers, especially when they do basic sign language with me. One weekend I was serving a deaf boy and he signed to me while I served the coffee. It felt good to be a role model, showing that deaf people are capable of working in a communication role.

I'm profoundly deaf, but don't use any special equipment at work. I'm very lucky – my colleagues are so supportive.

I studied Fine Art at the University of Wolverhampton, with a five-month student exchange at the University of Illinois. My deafness has never held me back – I've done skydives, I enjoy skiing and, of course, I love my art.

It doesn't matter if you don't always achieve your targets, just be you and don't sell yourself short. People might judge you, but you can prove them wrong.

Stay focused and positive, no matter how big or small your dreams.

Joy Collins



I was a coordinator for student disability support because...

I firmly believe that higher education should be accessible to all.

I was working as a gardener when I saw the Access for Deaf Students Initiative advertised at the University of Bristol. I'm severely to profoundly Deaf. I was encouraged to apply, as notetakers would be provided so we could study and follow lectures. I got a degree in Social Policy, then did a Masters and a PhD in Human Geography.

After my doctorate, a vacancy came up in Disability Services at the university. I got the job, and the notetaking service I'd found invaluable as a student was now run by me!

At work, I relied on British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters and electronic notetakers. Don't ever feel bad about needing support! Without it, I wouldn't have been able to study or do my job.

I retired early and am now a gardener again and an artist. Choose something you'll enjoy. Check the support available. Pace yourself – being deaf is tiring. And remember, you have unique skills to offer.

Ember Kelly



I'm an illustrator and children's illustration tutor because...

It always excites me to see children's amazing drawing ability.

I work on a freelance basis and my work is varied. I do drawn illustration commissions and I host workshops to teach illustration to children. I was really proud when, after

hosting 17 cartoon art workshops at Walthamstow's arts festival in 2019, the children created over 750 drawings.

I lost my hearing, aged four, to meningitis, with no hearing in my left ear and little hearing in my right. I wear a hearing aid. My father, who was an artist, taught me how to draw and paint and I did a degree in Art History. After working for 10 years in central government, I changed career path and became an illustrator. Persistence and support – personal, professional and through networking – have helped get me where I am today.

I really recommend developing your communication skills at workshops, seminars, classes and on social media. Go for all sorts of jobs and be open to volunteer work – it's an excellent way to build your skillset.

Tim Reedy



Be inspired by other deaf people at work in our Deaf Works Everywhere campaign video at www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere.

What does your child want to be when they grow up? For more information on careers, check our section about life after leaving school at www.ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool.



Phonak Sky Marvel. Combining world's first technological innovations to bring love at first sound to children with hearing loss.

Connects to smartphones, TVs, Roger and more

Sky Marvel is the world's first paediatric hearing aid that connects directly to most smartphone and Bluetooth™ enabled devices. In a world where modern devices can be a central part of a child's life, Sky Marvel enables intuitive access and quality streaming for speech, apps, music, e-books and much more!

Full day of hearing

With a 3-hour charge time, Sky M-PR provides a full day of hearing including 10 hours of Roger or streaming media. Parents and children can enjoy peace of mind knowing the hearing aids will stay powered on from morning to bedtime.

24% better speech understanding in noise

Phonak Sky Marvel features Autosense Sky OS, designed to adapt throughout a child's day giving children clear, rich sound even in the noisiest of situations.

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The Phonak Sky Marvel seamlessly connects to Roger devices without the need to attach external receivers. Your child can now wear 42% smaller and 32% lighter hearing aids, making for a more comfortable experience at home and in school.

To find out more please email sales@phonak.co.uk or visit www.phonak.co.uk

Sky Marvel offers:



Clear, rich sound



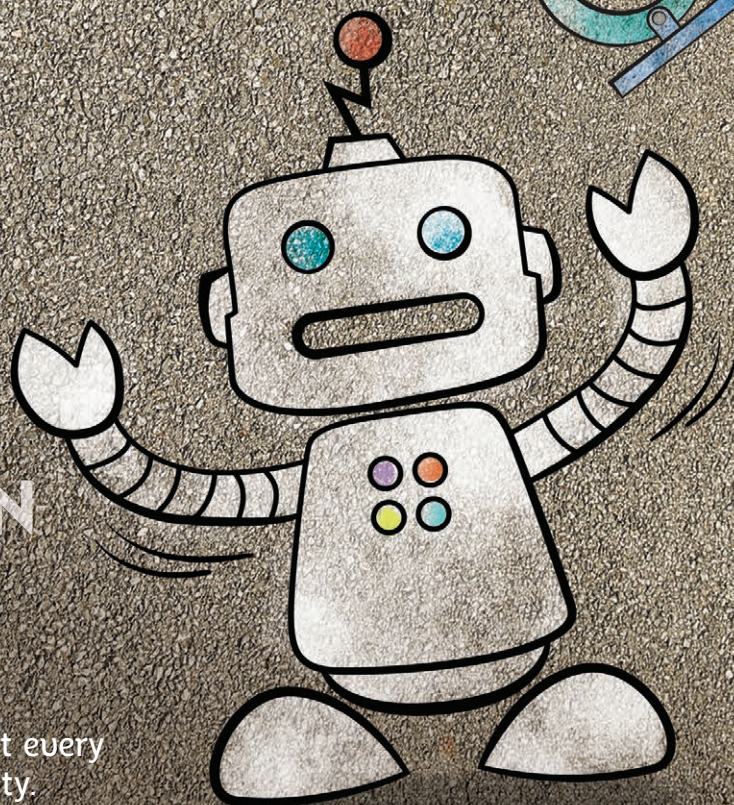
Connects to smartphones, Roger™ mics and more



Rechargeable



Child-specific design



WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO BE A SCIENTIST SO I CAN INVENT ROBOTS...

Dreams start young. With the right start every deaf child can turn a dream into a reality.

Mary Hare is the UK's largest school for deaf children and offers the ideal environment for your child to thrive.

Arrange your visit now.

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E: admissions@maryhare.org.uk

T: 01635 244215



Securing the future of deaf children and young people